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The hoofs of my beast sounded like the low rumbling of thunder as I rode over Stroudwater bridge. Page 124.

*Frontispiece*

*A Tory's Revenge*



# A TORY'S REVENGE

Being Ben. Mathew's Account of the Burning of  
Falmouth in 1775

Edited by WILLIAM P. CHIPMAN

Author of "A Brave Defense," "A Daring Capture," "Two  
Yankee Middies," "The Young Minuteman,"  
etc., etc.



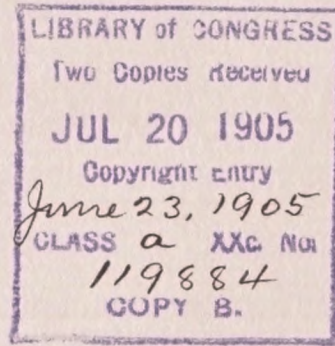
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A TORY'S REVENGE  
By William P. Chipman



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## EXPLANATORY NOTE.

“THOUGH I am now eighty-five years old, and it is full seventy years since the burning of Falmouth (or Portland, as the city is now called), the incidents of that event are as fresh in my mind as though they transpired but yesterday ; and I am constrained at this late day to tell the real story of that infamous act because of the present tendency to put the chief blame for the deed upon the head of Captain Henry Mowatt, commander of the British fleet. Several historians have already attributed to him both the origin and the execution of the cowardly destruction of Falmouth. While he was certainly the perpetrator of the dastardly crime, yet the origin of it lies with Captain Samuel Coulson. No man ought to know this better than I, for I was an inmate of the Coulson household for the space of nearly two years ; and I shall in these pages show that the burning of the ill-fated town was due to the spite of that notorious Tory.”—An extract from the preface to the manuscript of Ben-



jamin Mathews, from which this narrative is compiled.

I have taken pains to ascertain that Master Benjamin Mathews, whose manuscript, with only such changes as an editor would naturally make, is reproduced here, was a thoroughly respected and truthful person ; while a comparison of his historical facts with those of other reliable authorities has convinced me we have here the real explanation of an event which for its wantonness and cruelty was scarcely exceeded during the Revolutionary war. If at times the language of Master Mathews seems harsh and severe, it should be remembered that so careful and fair-minded a historian as John S. C. Abbott says of this very event in his History of Maine : "There can be no language too strong in which to denounce this fiend-like outrage."

WILLIAM P. CHIPMAN.



# A TORY'S REVENGE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### IN WHICH I MEET CAPTAIN COULSON.

IT is easy for me to recall where and when I met Captain Samuel Coulson \* for the first time, since that event is inseparably connected with two of the saddest experiences of my boyhood : the news of my father's death ; and a proposed change in my home.

My mother and I, together with my nine brothers and sisters, all younger than myself, were then living in a small, one-story house near the bank of the New Meadows river in Brunswick. I know now that it was a very humble home, but to me in those days, having seen but little of this world, it seemed all one could ask for. Possibly

\* I find that Captain Coulson is called Thomas, also John, by some authorities. I retain the name Samuel, believing Benjamin Mathews ought to know the Tory's given name.—Editor.



the presence of as true a mother as ever breathed, surrounded that humble spot with a charm no other residence has since had for me.

It was a raw, chilly day in early April, 1774—the very month I was fourteen years old—and I was chopping wood just back of the house, when two horsemen rode up to our door. Astonished at the unusual circumstance, I stuck my ax into the block and, stepping along to the nearest corner of the building, I, boy fashion, stared curiously at the strangers.

The next moment a gruff voice called out :

“Come here, youngster, and hold these beasts !”

I, hat in hand—for in those days we were expected to show proper respect towards our elders—hastened forward and immediately found myself face to face with two gentlemen, who had already dismounted.

I can see them now : one short and stout, and in the rough dress of a sailor ; the other tall, haughty, and imperious, and wearing finer clothing than I had ever beheld before in all my life. How my boyish heart coveted that rig !

A cocked hat adorned with buckles of gold, a dark top coat with golden buttons, an under coat of red, a blue vest, yellow breeches, high top boots, and a huge pair of riding gloves, made up a cos-



tume which in my young eyes seemed gorgeous enough for a king, and wondering who the distinguished caller might be, and what business he could have with my mother, I bowed low before him, and then took the reins of the horse he was still holding in my right hand, as he had commanded. The second animal was led over to me by the attendant, for such I took the plainly dressed man to be, though I could not understand why he wore a sailor's garb, and when I had grasped the reins of that beast with my left hand, both men left me without further ado, and went up to our front door.

The short, stout stranger knocked long and loudly there with his fist, while his companion beat the ground impatiently with his riding whip. In a few minutes mother came to the door, carrying my youngest sister, a babe of three months, on her arm. She seemed as astonished at the sight of the callers as I had been, but courteously invited them into the living room, and, as they left the door ajar on entering, I heard distinctly every word of the conversation that now ensued.

The tall visitor began.

"This is Mistress Katharine Mathews, is it not?" he asked somewhat superciliously I thought.



“Yes, sir,” mother replied.

“I am Captain Samuel Coulson of Falmouth,” the caller explained, and now I was sure there were both pomposity and pride in his tones.

“The owner of the vessel in which my husband last sailed !” exclaimed my mother, and I did not need the tremor of her voice to fill my own heart with a dark foreboding. Like her I was sure the visit of Captain Coulson to our house meant that some terrible misfortune had befallen us.

“This is Ezekiel Goodyear of the same ship, he will tell you what has happened,” the tall man continued ; then he came along to the open door, where he stood with his back towards my mother and Master Goodyear with the air of one who had turned a disagreeable job over to another person to perform.

“You see, missus,” the seaman began hesitatingly, “Ben—that’s your husband—an’ me was shipmates on the brig Susan Jane, bound for Liverpool an’ back. When two weeks out he fell overboard. ’Twas in the night, an’ there was an orful gale, and ’twas no use, he jess had to go to Davy Jones’ locker ; there was no help for it, an’ I’m sorry for ye, as sorry as I can be.”

He stopped there to draw a big handkerchief from his pocket, probably to wipe the moisture



from his forehead, for his effort had put him into a great sweat, but before he could use the cloth my mother, with a loud cry, fell from her chair in a faint.

“Help!—help!” the poor fellow screamed, hastening over to her side and gently raising her head from the floor.

“Quick! boy; help your mother; I’ll look out for the beasts,” exclaimed Captain Coulson rushing out to me, and forgetting in his excitement to be dignified.

I was already on my way to the house, however, and in another minute was kneeling beside my stricken parent, beseeching her to open her eyes and speak to me, while Ezekiel Goodyear, finding I had come, turned his attention to my baby sister, who was crying more from fright than because of any real injury she had received in her tumble from mother’s arms.

He must have been a master hand with children, for in an instant he had the little one quiet, and was directing my oldest sister, a girl of nearly thirteen, who had now come in from the kitchen where she had been with the other children, to bring me a dish of water that I might bathe mother’s face.

Polly, who was handy beyond her years about



all matters of the house, and who had seen mother in a similar faint before, needed no second bidding, and soon brought the water and assisted me in the restoration which now speedily followed.

“Benjamin ! Polly ! My fatherless children ! What shall I do ?” my mother murmured the moment her opening eyes fell upon us.

Before either of us could answer had we known what to say, Captain Coulson called out sharply from without :

“Haven’t you got that woman ready to talk yet ? I’ve important business to transact with her, but can’t wait here all day to attend to it.”

His harsh words became a potent restorative, and my mother sat up, saying loud enough for the waiting man to hear :

“Yes, I am well enough to attend to any matters Captain Coulson may care to adjust with me. Help me to a chair, children.”

Polly and I lifted her up, and put her upon the chair where she had been sitting, but she looked so pale I hesitated about leaving her to hold the horses for our visitor.

Master Goodyear must have seen my hesitation and understood the reason for it, for he immediately said :



“Remain here with your mother, lad ; it is your place. I will look out for the beasts.”

This arrangement must have been satisfactory to Captain Coulson, for he re-entered the house smiling benignantly.

“It may be hardly the thing, good mistress, to mention business matters in this hour of your great sorrow,” he began with a suavity I had not expected him to manifest ; “but it is a long way down here, and I am sure you will pardon me if I now attend to the little amount I owed your late husband. You heard Master Goodyear saying that the sad accident occurred when the ship was two weeks out. I shall double that time, however, and here is the pay in full,” and as he spoke he dropped two pounds into my mother’s hands.

“Thank you, sir,” she responded gratefully, while I hastened to express my own appreciation of his generous act ; for we both at that time firmly believed he had given us twice the amount due my father, nor was it until months afterwards that we learned that the Susan Jane was two weeks out on her homeward passage when the accident occurred, and that the wily schemer had, therefore, not paid us one third the amount which was our actual due.



Yet, knowing he had wronged us, there the villain stood receiving our expressions of gratitude, and saying :

“Pray do not mention it ; it is a very small matter I assure you.”

Then glancing slowly about the room as though he was taking an inventory of the few articles it contained, he at length went on :

“I wish to do even more for you, Mistress Mathews, but before I decide in what way, I must ask you a few questions. Do you own this—ahem ! this humble dwelling ?”

“No, sir,” she admitted.

“Ah ! and how many children have you ?”

“Ten,” she replied, finding it difficult to choke back the tears which in spite of herself would arise at the thought of the great burden which now devolved upon her.

“A good many mouths to feed ; a good many bodies to clothe,” he went on as though his own heart was heavy with the great responsibility. “Some of us must help you lift the load, and this shall be my part. As soon as you can arrange for it send this oldest boy of yours to me at Falmouth. I can find work for him, and will pay you a constantly increasing wage for his services. When he is a little older he shall be trained to



command one of my vessels. Then he can support you very comfortably. Tell me, is it a bargain ?”

Looking as we did upon the speaker as already our benefactor, it is not strange that my mother and myself were overwhelmed by this kind proposal. We could see in it only a real desire on his part to help us in our time of [need, and I quickly exclaimed :

“If I must leave home, sir, nothing would please me better than to enter your service ;” while mother remarked with an emotion she could not conceal :

“God bless you, sir, for your kindness to the widow and the fatherless ; and though I cannot spare the lad just yet, we are not in a position to reject your handsome offer, and you may expect to hear from us a little later.”

“Let me see,” the Captain answered, rubbing his smoothly shaven chin thoughtfully ; “It is now the first week in April. Say you send the boy over to me early next month ; how will that do ?”

After some hesitation my mother consented, and, with a gracious bow to us both, our visitor went out to his horses, and soon he and Master Goodyear rode away.



I have related these circumstances in my family history that it may be known how I came to be an inmate of the Coulson household, and I shall trouble you no further with my private affairs than to say : Within thirty days after the coming of our visitors the humble dwelling where we had so long resided was abandoned ; my mother becoming the housekeeper at a place where she was permitted to take her two youngest children ; my other brothers and sisters going to homes provided for them among distant relatives and friends ; while I set out on my long tramp to Falmouth, firmly believing that I was entering upon a career seldom vouchsafed a lad of my years, and all because of the kindness of the man to whom I was going.

There is a single incident of my journey of which I will speak—very puzzling to me at that time, but which I came to understand before many weeks had passed. I was within eight or ten miles of the town and, thirsty from my twenty miles of travel, stopped at the well of a farmhouse to obtain a drink of water. As I quaffed the cool and refreshing liquid a man came out from the dwelling and accosted me :

“Traveling far ?” he asked.

I told him whence I had come, and we were



soon engaged in a conversation during which he learned who I was and where I was going.

“I want to know,” he drawled, “if you are going to work for Captain Coulson?”

“Yes,” I assented with considerable pride.

“Well,” he continued with that same inimitable drawl, “I pity ye.”

I resumed my journey with the first feelings of misgiving I had experienced since Captain Coulson had made his beneficent offer to my mother. Could it be he was deceiving us? Would I find his service different from that, I, in my boyish enthusiasm, had pictured it? I could not believe it; and dismissing the remark of the farmer as one begotten in a jealous heart, I hastened along the rough path before me, anxious to reach the town before sunset.

But the sun had been some time out of sight, and the shades of night were rolling rapidly down when I reached the village, and inquired of the first person I met, a lad of about my own age, with whom I was destined to have a most intimate acquaintance, the way to Captain Coulson’s residence.

The boy came close to my side and looked me over in the darkness; then he said:

“My name is Enoch Freeman, what is yours?”



"Benjamin Mathews," I replied unhesitatingly, for there was a heartiness in the tones of the youth I liked.

"Are you to live at Captain Coulson's?" he next inquired.

"Yes, I expect to," I responded; "anyway I am to work for him."

"We shall be near each other," was his only comment. "Come on! I will show you."

He led the way down a near-by street, pointing out as we passed along, his own home, and stopping soon before a dwelling which even in the darkness I knew to be more pretentious than any of its neighbors.

"Here you are," he remarked. "Go around to the side door, near that window where you see the light, and knock," and with this bit of advice he left me.

His sudden departure had a curious effect upon me. I experienced a sensation so new and indescribable I knew not what to call it. I have since learned it was home-sickness, but at that time it seemed as though a huge hand had been thrust down my throat and was tearing away at my heart-strings. I would have given anything to have broken away from its grasp and fled over the weary miles I had come to my mother. But



irresistibly I was drawn on, into the yard, and around to the door which had been pointed out to me, where I raised mechanically the brass sounder whose resonant blows at the next moment seemed to my excited nerves to be so many hollow voices mocking at my misery.



## CHAPTER II.

### IN WHICH I AM A FREQUENTER OF GREELE'S TAVERN.

A middle-aged woman, evidently a servitor, answered my knock, and opened the door wide enough to see who was there, but waited for me to make my errand known.

“Is Captain Samuel Coulson in?” I inquired, with some tremor in my voice I confess; for now that I was at the great man's door I did not feel so sure about my welcome.

“No, he's gone to Boston,” she answered curtly, starting to shut the door in my face.

But I was too quick for her, and asked before the aperture was fairly closed:

“Is Mistress Coulson in, then?”

“Yes,” she assented through the crack, “but she sees no one as late as this; she's an invalid;” and then the door was actually closed upon me.

For a moment I stood there hardly knowing what to do, and then I ventured to knock again.



The same woman immediately pushed the door ajar, asking crossly :

“ Well, what do you want now ? ”

“ I'm the boy from Brunswick, who was to come here to work,” I stammered in my desperation ; for a fear had come upon me that I might have to pass the chilly night in the street.

“ I know nothing about it,” she retorted, “ but Miss Dora may. I suppose you may as well step in while I call her.”

Ungracious as the invitation was I obeyed—for there was nothing else for me to do—and stood there in the little entry while she went to call Miss Dora, whoever she might be.

As I waited I could not help looking into the rooms at my right and left. The former was the living room of the house as I soon learned, but its gorgeous rugs and upholstery appeared to my uninitiated eyes fit to adorn a palace.

But dazzling as the splendor of this room was, that of the one on my left, in my boyish estimation, surpassed it. That it was the dining-room the massive table at its center clearly showed. It was neither this nor the other heavy furniture of the apartment, however, that awakened my admiration, so much as the spotless linen, the delicate china, and the glistening silver under which



the table groaned. I had heard there were such things, but now I beheld them for the first time.

As I gazed, almost spell-bound by the sight, the tall figure of Captain Coulson, clad in the same gorgeous attire he wore when calling on my mother arose before me, and I began to feel that the splendor I now saw was nothing more than I should have expected to find in his home.

Along with this thought there came another : it was the man possessing these priceless things who had been so gracious to us, and who had invited me to his house ; whereupon I dismissed every misgiving that had been struggling to enter my heart, and, puffed up with pride, tried to think of myself as a favored sharer in all this splendor. I was just wondering how long it would take me to become accustomed to it, when the servant returned accompanied by a tall, showily dressed woman, who so closely resembled the Captain in figure and feature and was so near his own age, I had no hesitation in deciding that she must be his sister ; and I may as well say here as anywhere, never were two peas more alike than Dora and Samuel Coulson.

Critically the haughty woman looked me over, but I could not tell whether she was pleased



or displeased with my appearance ; then she said :

“ So you are Benjamin Mathews ? ”

“ Yes, good mistress,” I replied, making my best bow.

“ Don’t good mistress me,” she snapped out, and stamping her foot in her rage. “ I am simply Miss Dora to you and to every other servitor in this house.”

“ I beg your pardon, Miss Dora,” I managed to say in my fright, “ but I—I didn’t know just what to call you.”

“ Of course you didn’t,” she responded, as one who, having made the impression she wished, could now afford to be gracious. “ We shall get along nicely together, I think. You came around to the side door to-night when most boys would have gone to the front entrance, which shows you are a lad of good sense and knew your place, a thing John Weston, who will instruct you in your duties, never knew. I’m glad my brother had sense enough to dismiss him.”

Then she turned to the waiting servant.

“ Here, Jane,” she directed, “ take Benjamin out to the kitchen and give him his supper. Then show him to his room,” and with these words she swept out of our presence with the air of one who



would no longer be troubled with matters which were so beneath her attention.

Through the richly adorned dining-room I followed Jane to a kitchen scarcely better appointed than, and nowhere near as neat as, my mother's, where I ate my supper; then I was shown to a loft over the stable, no more comfortable than the attic in my old home, where I was told I was to sleep. So quickly did my air dreams in the little entry fall to pieces; so quickly did I learn that my place in the Coulson household was to be that of the lowest menial.

In that humble stable chamber I found John Weston, whose place I was to take. He was a youth of twenty or thereabouts, and had a shrewd but not unkindly face. To Jane's brief announcement: "This is Benjamin Mathews, the boy who is to do your work," he replied with some sarcasm I thought: "And for poorer pay I suspect," at which both he and the woman laughed.

When we were alone, however, he put his hand in mine saying heartily:

"I am glad to know you, Benjamin, and to share this room with you for a single night. It will give me a chance to learn whether you can do *all* my work," and the emphasis he put upon the little word "all" led me to look up quickly



at him, to find that he was regarding me with a keenness which seemed to read me through and through.

Wondering what part of his work he was afraid I could not do I waited for him to go on, which he did in a way that puzzled me even more than the emphasis he had put into his words, or the intent look he was giving me, for I could not see what it had to do with the matter we were discussing.

"I suppose you have heard how the patriots threw overboard that tea down at Boston last December?" he asked with a chuckle.

"Yes," I admitted, forgetting my wonderment at the question in my sudden recollection of the exciting tale. "Colonel Samuel Thompson, the member of the Provincial Congress from our district, sent home the news. It was the sixteenth day of December that it occurred, and seventeen of the patriots dressed up as Indians to do the work. They went on board the two ships and the brig which contained the tea, and, breaking open the three hundred and forty-two chests, emptied the loose tea out into the water. They say there was a pile all around the vessels as high as their decks," and I laughed aloud as the picture of those great heaps rose before my mind.



“What do you think of the deed?” he queried, watching me still very intently.

“Think of it?” I exclaimed. “What can any true patriot think of it, but to wish he might have been one of the brave fellows to do the deed?” a reply which seemed to greatly please my companion.

“Do you know Colonel Samuel Thompson!” he inquired a moment or two later. “I think you spoke of him.”

“I have seen him many times,” I responded. “He is a bold, daring man, who will be heard from in the defense of the colonies should we have trouble with the king, but I doubt if he even knows there is such a boy as Benjamin Mathews.”

“Never mind, he may know of you yet,” Master Weston replied consolingly, “for I am sure you too could be counted on in defense of the colonies.”

Again his searching gaze was upon me, but I looked him unfalteringly in the face as I replied:

“Young as I am I have been taught there is one thing dearer than life, and that is liberty.”

“I see you can be trusted to do *all* my work,” he immediately remarked with the same peculiar emphasis he had used before. “I will, however,



keep you up no longer, for you must be tired with your long tramp. I have a trip down town, and may not be in until quite late, but I will take care not to disturb you with my coming. Good night," and a moment later he had left me alone in the loft.

Five minutes after Master Weston had departed I had forgotten my talk with him, my interview with Miss Dora, and my long tramp from Brunswick, in the sound and refreshing sleep which comes to a thoroughly tired boy; nor did I again realize where I was, or the prospect before me, until I was awakened by my bedfellow who called out :

"Hurry and dress, Ben. This is my last, and your first day, in the employ of Samuel Coulson. There is, therefore, much for me to show you, so let us get about it."

I obeyed, and before the sun set again had found that I was expected to be chore-boy, hostler, cowherd, gardener, and boatman, a combination of duties so onerous I realized I should have but few minutes I could call my own.

So busy were we I do not now remember that I once recalled the strange conversation Master Weston had held with me the night before, and doubtless it would have soon dropped entirely



from my memory but for an equally strange act on his part ere the day closed.

We were coming up from the boathouse, where we had been that I might become acquainted with my duties down there, and had reached a long, low, one-story building on which there was the sign of a public house, when John stopped.

“Have you ever heard of Mistress Greele’s tavern?” he suddenly asked, fixing his eyes on me again with that intent gaze.

“Yes,” I replied.

“Tell me what you know of it,” he returned.

“The Tories call it ‘a hot-bed of disloyalty,’” I said with a laugh.

“Yes,” he admitted; “but why?”

“It is where the patriots always meet for their deliberations,” I answered. “When the tax was put on tea our county delegates gathered there and resolved to buy no more tea until the duty was repealed; and it is where the American Association, formed for the purpose of opposing all tyrannical monopoly of trade and manufactures, have their meetings. I heard Captain Nehemiah Curtis of Harpswell saying not long ago that they had decided that no English goods of any kind should be landed here.”



“You are well informed about the affairs of the town though you have just come here,” my companion remarked with a pleasant smile. “I am surer than ever you can do *all* my work.”

Instantly his strange talk of the previous evening returned to my mind but, before I could give it much thought, he continued :

“Well, this is Mistress Greele’s tavern, and I have some good friends in there I wish you to meet ; “ then he led the way into the building.

I followed him more perplexed by this act than by anything he had said to me. Down a narrow corridor, like one who was familiar with the place, he went to a door in the rear of the house on which he tapped softly three times.

“Come in,” a voice immediately responded, and we obeyed to find ourselves in the presence of five grave and dignified men, who were evidently expecting us. For over to them Master Weston walked, and without any further ceremony than a courteous deference said :

“This is the lad, good sirs, about whom I have told you. His name is Benjamin Mathews, and from what I have learned of him I am convinced he will take my place, and do *all* my work.”

Then turning to me he went on :

“Benjamin, this is General Jedediah Preble,



and this is Colonel Enoch Freeman, and this is Squire Theophilus Parsons, and this is Doctor Joseph Coffin, and this is Master John Pagan.” \*

I shook hands with each gentleman as he was presented, but with a bewilderment I could not overcome, for I could not understand why I, a mere boy, should, in less than twenty-four hours after I had reached Falmouth, be introduced to a committee of men, who, as I knew the moment I heard their names, were not only leading citizens of the town, but as well-known patriots as there were in all the province. Nor did the words spoken by General Preble as soon as I was introduced relieve that bewilderment.

“ We are sure you are right, Master Weston,” he said. “ One look into that lad’s face is sufficient to warrant a hope on our part of the most faithful service from him, and he will now know where to find us ;” and then with marked courtesy he bowed us out of the room.

“ How am I to serve those men ?” I asked my comrade the moment the door closed upon us.

“ I will tell you when we reach the little room in the stable loft,” was his reply ; a reply with

\* I find all these names on the official list of the Falmouth Safety committee at this time, which consisted of nineteen members—*Editor*.



which I was forced to be content, for I could get nothing more out of him.

But even when we were in the little chamber he did not seem in a hurry to explain a matter I was both curious and anxious to know more about. Instead he busied himself in packing his few belongings into a bundle he could carry on his back, for, as he told me, he had a long tramp before him, and expected to be many miles away before he slept, though he did not tell where he was going.

At length, however, his preparations were completed, and the pack, with my help, securely fastened to his shoulders. Then turning his keen eyes upon me he said :

“ Ben, you will never disclose to any one else what I am now about to reveal to you, unless ordered to do so by the Safety Committee you met to-night? I ask it for the sake of the cause.”

“ If it is for the cause's sake, John,” I replied, “ you may trust me.”

“ I knew it,” he responded, giving my hand a grip that made me wince. “ Come here.”

He led me over to the east end of the loft, where was the stout planking which separated the stable from the house.



“Do you see any difference in these boards?” he inquired.

I examined them carefully, pressing against each plank in turn, but all seemed alike, so I replied : “No.”

“Take the third one from the south corner,” he directed, “and, putting one hand at its top, and the other at its bottom, push it from you.”

I did so, and to my surprise the plank went in enough to slip by the adjoining one, leaving an opening through which a person could easily pass.

“Step in, and tell me what you see,” my comrade now said.

I obeyed, and as soon as my eyes became used to the darkness I replied :

“There is nothing here but an attic, the one over the kitchen, though there is a door at the farther end, I think.”

“You are not looking where I meant,” John explained. “What is that attached to the board at your right?”

“An empty box,” I exclaimed, thrusting my hand into the narrow receptacle. “What is it for?”

“Every night after your work is over,” Master Weston went on gravely, “you are to remove this



plank, and look into that box. If there is a letter in it, you are to take it out and carry it at once to the committee you met to-night, and whom you will find waiting for it. Should they give you any letter in return, you are to bring it back with you and put it into the box. Always be sure, however, that your act is unobserved. Come out now, and I'll show you how to close the slide."

I must have proved an apt scholar, for after two or three trials I could open and close the secret passage as noiselessly and dexterously as he. Then he said :

"My work is done ; good-by," and he held out his hand for a parting grip.

"One thing more," I cried as I took his hand ; "you have not told me who puts the letters here. Whose messenger am I ?"

"It is not for me to tell you," he answered, "nor is it necessary for you to know. You have been told your part. See that you do it faithfully and well," and the next instant he had disappeared down the stairs.

Puzzle as I would over the strange mission upon which I had entered I could hit upon no satisfactory solution of it. I could not understand why there should be a secret communication between the Coulson household and the Safety



Committee of the town ; nor could I decide with any certainty upon the member of the family who was holding that communication.

But that it was a constant thing was sure, for ten times within the next three weeks I found letters in the hidden box, which I carried to Greele's tavern ; and thrice I brought back messages to deposit in that receptacle. Then a thing happened which revealed what, to me at least, were two surprising facts about the household of which I was an inmate.



## CHAPTER III.

### IN WHICH CAPTAIN COULSON GETS ANGRY.

IT was the morning after I had carried my tenth message to Greele's tavern that Enoch Freeman came into the garden where I was at work. He had run into the yard several times for a friendly chat since the night I first met him, and I not only felt quite well acquainted with him, but liked him better and better. He resembled his honored father, Colonel Freeman, in looks, and had the same hearty way in greeting you, that won your heart.

This time, however, he was accompanied by another lad, whom I knew to be Samuel Deane, the minister's \* son, though I had never spoken with him before; and like those who were much in a hurry, and could spare but the briefest moment, they came up to me. Enoch was the spokesman, and said :

\* Rev. Dr. Samuel Deane, who had been many years pastor in Falmouth, and who has himself left an account of the burning of the town.—*Editor*.



“This is Samuel Deane, Ben.”

I acknowledged the introduction, and then my friend went on hastily :

“There is to be a town meeting at nine o’clock. Important news has come that calls for some action on the part of the people, so father has sent Sam and I and a half dozen other lads to call them together. We thought you’d like to and know of it, and ran in to tell you.”

Before I could thank him for the information he and his comrade were on their way to the street, where they parted, one going in one direction, and the other in another, as though they would expedite the work to which they had been assigned—and there was need of it, for it was already within an hour of the time they had named.

My first thought as I continued my planting was that I would attend the coming meeting without going to the house for permission to do so. I argued that I could easily make up the lost time and, therefore, no injury would be done Captain Coulson. But I had been taught to be honorable in all dealings, even the smallest, and somehow I could not persuade myself that it would be right to take even an hour from my work without the consent of those over me. So



fifteen minutes before nine I went to the house and inquired for Miss Dora. When she appeared I told her about the gathering and asked that I might be allowed to attend it.

“A mass meeting of the townspeople!” she exclaimed with flashing eyes, which I mistook for excitement, or unusual interest in the event. “Some important tidings that has called them together! What can the—” suddenly she checked herself, and I never knew what she intended to say, though I am now sure it was something very unkind about the patriots.

For a moment or two she gazed thoughtfully at me as though trying to come to some decision, then she went on with one of the sweetest smiles I ever saw on the lips of a woman:

“Go by all means, Benjamin! I would not have you miss this meeting for anything; and when you return come and tell me all about it. I shall want to know everything.”

“Certainly, Miss Dora, you shall have a full report of the proceedings,” I answered, not for a moment suspecting I was falling into a trap the wily woman had set for me, and that I would be giving her information that would be sent to the British headquarters at Boston as quickly as a swift courier could carry it.



Elated at my leave of absence, and quite ready to believe that Miss Dora was the member of the household who was putting the patriotic messages into the hidden box, I hastened down the street determined that she should have the best account of the morning assembly it was in my power to give! That resolve will explain how I am able even at this late day to tell so minutely what occurred there.

I ran in with Enoch Freeman and Samuel Deane as I reached the hall, and together we entered the building, which was already filled, though it still lacked a few minutes of the designated hour; while before the meeting was called to order the room was packed to a point of suffocation. Colonel Freeman presided, and a hush went over the great audience as he rapped for their attention.

"Fellow-citizens," he said, "General Preble will address you."

With his tall form drawn to its fullest height, his eyes flashing with the indignation he felt, and his voice ringing out clear and strong in its intense patriotism, the distinguished speaker began:

"Neighbors and friends, it has already been reported to you how two months ago the king's parliament, in retaliation for the destruction of



tea in Boston harbor last December, passed a threefold act striking in part against that unfortunate city, and in part against all the colonists. Let me recall to your memories the three provisions of that shameful enactment. The first provides that the port of Boston shall be closed to all trade on and after the first day of June, that is three days hence ; the second provides for a change in our charter on August first, by which the power is vested in the crown to appoint our councillors, who have heretofore been chosen by the General Court ; the third provides that any officer accused with a capital offense shall be sent to England for trial. Thus it is, fellow-citizens, that our most sacred rights are taken from us ; thus it is that our liberties are trampled upon. Shall we submit without emphatic protest to such treatment even though the hand of one who calls himself our rightful sovereign deals the blow ? ”

“ No ! No ! ” a hundred voices cried out.

“ We all say ‘ no, ’ ” he went on after the shouts had subsided, “ when such laws are enacted ; but there is something worse than that : it is to have such laws enforced ; and this is the determination of the king. For, as we are credibly informed—” and it seemed to me that at this mo-



ment he allowed his eyes to rest directly upon me—"General Thomas Gage has already arrived in Boston, commissioned as the military ruler of the colony with special instructions from the crown to enforce all three provisions of the abominable act."

"Down with the tyrant! Down with the tyrant!" the assembly shouted as one man.

"It is well to say: 'Down with the tyrant,' but how?" continued the speaker. "Already he has given his negative to thirteen of our newly chosen councillors; already he has adjourned the General Court to Salem. Already are there threats in the air that he will prorogue the Assembly unless it does his bidding. So soon does he show his high hand."

I cannot describe the effect of those words, for who can describe a silence? Over the crowd there now came a hush so oppressive that it checked the speech of General Preble as effectively as the shouts or the plaudits of his hearers would have done. With flashing eyes, and heaving breasts, and clenched hands, and stern faces, the patriots stood there gazing at the speaker until a voice somewhere in the room said clearly, but quietly:

"Tell us what we are to do, and we'll do it."



That utterance broke the spell and a peal of voices rang out:

“Yes! yes! tell us what is expected of us!”

“You are called here to-day,” the general answered in tones that thrilled us, “to place on record a threefold resolution, a resolution which shall include a demand, a denunciation, and a pledge; a demand that the royal mandate shall be repealed; a denunciation of the tyrannical acts of the new governor; and a pledge to our colleagues in Boston of our help.”

“We’ll do it! We’ll do it! Draw them up!” a score of voices shouted.

Taking up a paper which, until that moment, had been lying on the table, and which proved to be a draft of resolutions covering the very points he had mentioned, General Preble read it through in loud, clear tones, and then moved its adoption. In a trice the motion was carried without a dissenting vote.

“We are ready for a motion to adjourn,” the chairman here announced.

“One moment, sir, before we go,” Master John Pagan exclaimed leaping to his feet. “I move that on June first the bells of our town be muffled and rung all day as an expression of our sympathy for the unfortunate inhabitants of Boston.”



This move was immediately voted, and Colonel Freeman, General Preble, and Squire Parsons were appointed a committee to arrange for its execution.

“We shall need bell-ringers,” the Colonel said with a smile, “and after our adjournment we shall be glad to receive the names of all who are willing to serve the cause in this way. Here is a chance for our younger colleagues to show their patriotism.”

“Come on,” Enoch Freeman exclaimed the moment the meeting was adjourned, “let us be among the volunteers,” and he led the way up to the platform with Sam Deane and myself close at his heels. When our names had been enrolled we left the building, and I hastened home to tell Miss Dora what I had seen and heard.

I found her on the porch, waiting for me, anxious to listen to my tale as I then fully believed because of her love for the cause; but really waiting as I now know because of a fear she had that I would escape her, and with flushed cheek and heart all afire I told her, omitting no important detail, all the proceedings of the morning.

How excited she became before I had finished! Leaping from the bench on which she was sitting she walked the stoop struggling with her feelings.



Again and again she started to speak, but checked herself until I had done. Then she said sweetly :

“Thank you, Benjamin ; you have done so nicely this time, I shall want to use you in this way again. Always let me know when the town’s people are going to hold a meeting. You may now return to your work.”

It shames me now to tell it, and yet it is true. So cleverly was I deceived by that woman I went back to the garden saying to myself what an hour or two before I had conjectured :

“You are the one, Miss Dora, who is in communication with the Town Committee. I know it as well as though you had told me,” and I smiled complacently at my shrewdness in making the discovery. Three days later I learned what an idiot I had been.

It happened in this way. I was in the belfry of the Congregational meeting-house with Sam Deane and Enoch Freeman, serving my time as a bell-ringer. With Sam’s father as the preacher in the building, and Enoch’s father as the chairman of the committee of arrangements, we three lads had easily managed to have our time and place of service come together ; so there we were all the afternoon of June first, each taking a spell of a half hour at the rope, until we had com-



pleted our allotment of six hours—two apiece—in the work.

We were in an hour of the ending, and I had relieved Enoch for my last bout with the bell, when he exclaimed excitedly :

“If I live, there is Captain Coulson on his way up from the docks. He must have just arrived from Boston. Yes, there’s his vessel now anchored off in the harbor. Quick, Ben ! Give Sam the rope and scud for home. We’ll finish your part of the work. If you go out the rear door of the meeting-house and cut across the fields you will get there before him. Hurry now !”

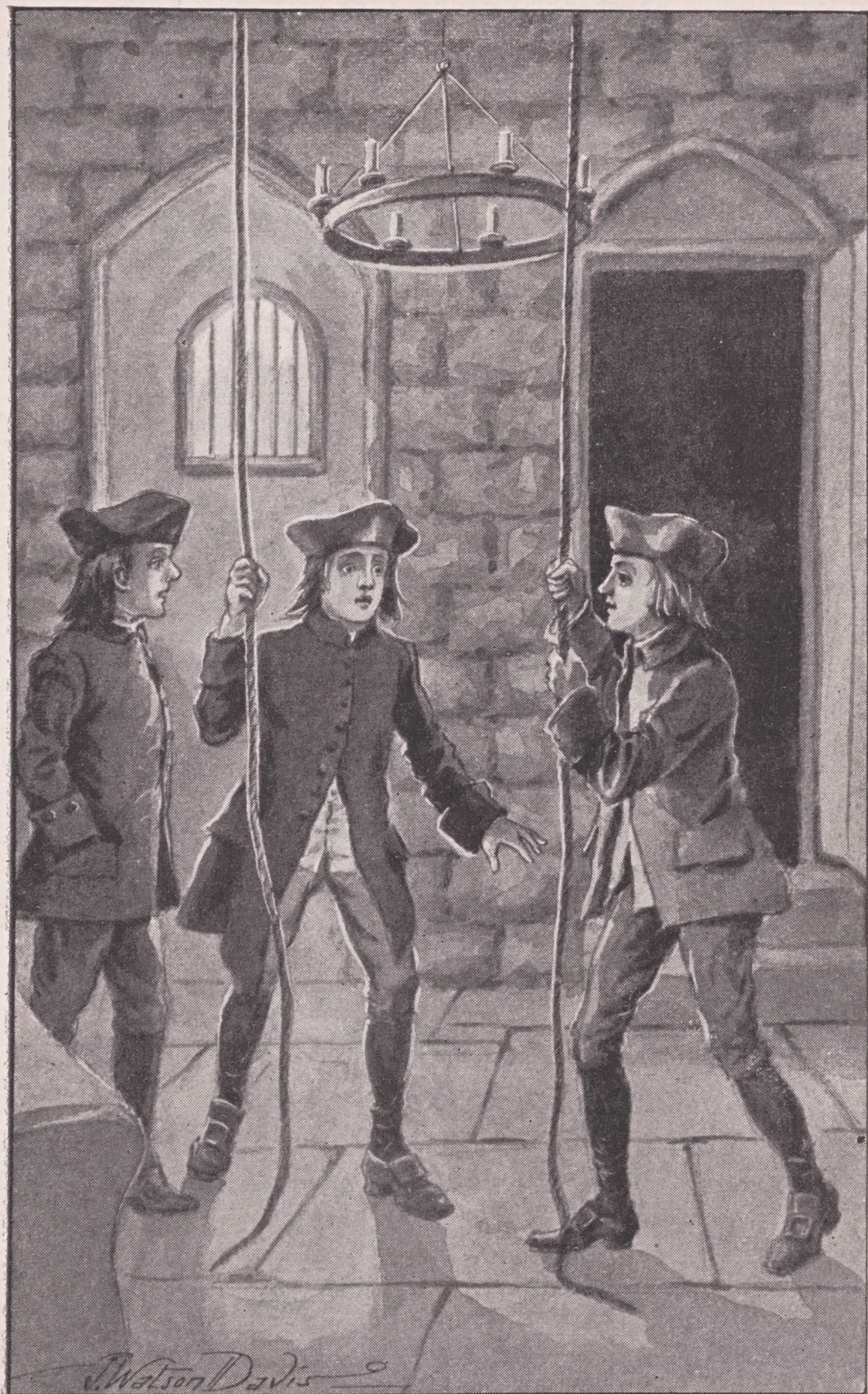
“Why should I hasten back until my part of this work is over ?” I replied, and refusing to surrender the cord to Sam, who had stepped forward to take it. “What if I did come off without telling any one where I was going ? I can explain where I have been when I return to the house.”

With wide open eyes my comrades stared at me as if I were crazy. Then Enoch gasped :

“Tell Captain Coulson what you have been doing here this afternoon ! Why, he will kill you !”

“Why should he do that ?” I asked with as little concern as I could assume, for I was really alarmed at his words.





Then Enoch gasped: "Tell Captain Coulson what you have been doing here this afternoon! Why, he will kill you!"







“Why, don’t you know, the Captain is a Tory, the very worst Tory in all this section?” both lads cried incredulously.

“No,” I confessed, giving the rope to Sam in preparation for my flight. Then a wave of hope swept over me.

“But Miss Dora,” I exclaimed, “she is a patriot, and will protect me.”

“She a patriot!” answered the boys with withering scorn; “why she is a worse Tory than her brother, and you better not tell her what you have been doing! There! run on; you may yet reach the house in time to save yourself.”

I think the chief thought in my mind as I hurried out of the rear end of the meeting-house, and up a side street to the Coulson dwelling was that my informers must be mistaken about Miss Dora. Yet I knew they would not intentionally deceive me and, therefore, gave a sigh of relief when I entered our stable undiscovered as I believed.

That relief was short-lived, however, for before I had finished caring for the first horse an angry voice called out:

“Young man, where have you been all this afternoon?”

I had prepared myself in a measure for such a



question, and, stepping out of the stall in which I was, I confronted Miss Dora with a smiling face.

“I told you, Miss Dora,” I said innocently, “about the ringing of the muffled bells to-day, and believing you would want me to do my part I have been at it for several hours. My ! how my arms ache.”

Now that I had been informed she was a Tory I had little difficulty in reading her face. I knew immediately that my answer had disconcerted her. For a moment she struggled to control herself, and keep up the pretense she had made only three days before ; then her real feelings assumed the mastery, and she screamed out :

“Thought I would want you to help the rebels in their dirty work ! I had rather have seen them all thrown into the bay ! To think that a member of the Coulson household has actually helped ring those bells ! It will be a laughing-stock all over town before morning. You shall pay dearly for this. My brother is at home, and when he has done with you, you will never dare speak to a traitor again, much less help him !” and she flounced away.

I went on with my chores in a state of trepidation. I wanted to run away, and yet I felt it



would be a cowardly thing to do. I had done nothing I was ashamed of, nothing but what I would do again though I suffered for it; and I decided to stay and face the consequences of my act whatever they might be. Possibly I was influenced in my decision by a hope that Captain Coulson would be more reasonable than his sister had been.

I do not know whether Miss Dora was long in finding her brother, or whether he purposely delayed his coming until my work was done. But I remember I had finished my last chore at the barn, and was about to go to the kitchen for my supper as usual, when he stepped through the door. One glance at him dashed every hope of mercy I had expected from him to the ground. He was livid with passion, and before I could say a word hissed out :

“So I am harboring a traitor, am I? Well, I’ll show you how I deal with traitors wherever I find them on land or sea,” and he sprang upon me with the fury of a tiger.

In his powerful clutch I was as helpless as a babe, and in an instant he dragged me to a post to which he speedily tied me, face against it. Every effort on my part to explain why I had helped to ring the bells was drowned in a torrent



of blasphemous abuse, and at length I resolved to bear any punishment he might inflict without a murmur.

But in that resolve I was not prepared for what speedily took place. Pulling my shirt out of my breeches, he rolled it up until my back was bare to the shoulders ; then he drew out from under his coat a cat-o-nine-tails.

At the sight of the cruel weapon I changed my resolution, and made a single remonstrance.

“ You have no right to punish me in this way, sir,” I said.

“ Haven’t I,” he cried gleefully, and stepping around where I could see him plainly. “ We’ll see about that ! Look at these papers ! ” and putting the lash under his arm, he drew some documents from his pocket.

“ Those are your indenture papers,” he went on glibly, “ by which your mother has bound you to me until you are of age. I rather think those give me the right to punish you as I choose, and I choose to let every drop of your rebel blood out of you here and now.”

I was dumfounded. I could not understand how my mother had given those papers without consulting me. It never occurred to me the man was lying, as he indeed was ; lying that he might



appear to have a legal right to whip me, and so close my mouth against all complaint.

Restoring the papers to his pocket, he seized the cat-o-nine-tails, and began his fiendish work. Twenty times that lash cut the air with a whish I can hear after the lapse of all these years ! Twenty times it fell upon my bare back ! Twenty times it sank into my flesh deep enough to draw the blood ! How much longer the brute would have flogged me I do not know. He stopped because I fainted.

When I recovered consciousness I was lying on my bed in the stable loft. It was dark, so I knew I had been there some time, but how long I could not tell. I was thirsty, and attempted to get upon my feet, with a vague idea of descending to the well for a refreshing draught, but the next moment I fell back with a groan I could not repress.

Then there was a low step in the kitchen attic ; a moment later the secret slide was pushed back, and a woman draped all in white, and looking to me like an angel, stepped into my room. She held a light in one hand, and a cup containing some kind of ointment in the other. Placing her candle on my stand, she bent over me saying gently :



“Poor boy! You have been treated shamefully, but I will do all I can to relieve your suffering.”

Then she turned me over and rubbed my lacerated back with the cool mixture, an application that soothed the torn flesh, eased the terrible pain, and gave me a relief I would not have believed possible five minutes before.

“Now for some supper,” she remarked with a smile, and leaving me for the attic. The bowl of cool and delicious porridge she brought must have been near at hand for she returned in an instant. Putting it to my lips she let me drain the dish to the last drop. Then she said in the same gentle voice :

“There ! I think you will be comfortable for the night. See if you can go to sleep. I will sit by you for a while.”

“But who are you ?” I pleaded. “Tell me that before I sleep.”

“I am Mistress Coulson,” she replied.

“But I thought you were an invalid,” I exclaimed.

“I am,” she answered simply, and now I saw the marks of suffering on her beautiful face ; “but when an injustice is done one who loves the cause I can find the strength to minister to him.



"You are my hero," and she kissed me as my mother might have done.

At her words a flood of light rushed in upon me.

"I have been your messenger to the Committee," I said.

"Yes," she acknowledged frankly. "The Coulsons are all Tories, but I am a Thompson, a sister of Colonel Samuel Thompson of Brunswick, and like him I love the colonies."

She was silent a few minutes, and then as though her conduct needed fuller explanation she continued :

"My husband and his sister are the paid agents of the king, in touch with his minions in Boston and London. They are doing all they can to thwart the cause and injure the patriots. I work to undo what they are constantly doing. But of course I am obliged to act in secret. John Weston was my messenger until you came, and you have served me faithfully since. But we will not talk more to-night. I shall see you again soon, though you must not tell any one of my visits. Now close your eyes and go to sleep."

I did as she wished, and dreamed I had entered into a compact with her to watch and frustrate every plan of Captain Coulson and Miss Dora's ; a dream which soon came to pass.



## CHAPTER IV.

### IN WHICH THE SLOOP OF WAR, CANSEAU, APPEARS.

It was light when I awoke, and save a stiffness and soreness in my back I felt quite like myself. Believing I could attend to my duties as usual, I made an effort to rise, but a hand touched my arm, and the voice of Mistress Coulson said :

“No, no, Ben ! Lie still ; we shall keep you here to-day.”

“But what will the Captain say ?” I protested.

“He will not disturb you,” she answered with a reassuring smile. Then noticing my look of wonderment she continued :

“He has already been here, and, finding you were still lying with your eyes closed, became quite alarmed about you. Now that his anger is over he realizes it would not be safe to have it become known in the neighborhood that you were seriously ill from the flogging he had given you. So he looked up Jane and directed her to give you every attention necessary to insure your recovery.”

Here she paused a moment as though uncertain



whether to make a further confidant of me, and then, evidently deciding to have no secrets between us, went on :

“Jane, though the Captain is not aware of it, is on our side, and knowing of my first visit to you, immediately reported her master’s directions to me. We agreed that it would be good policy to keep you in bed for a day or two, however well you might feel ; and should the Captain or Miss Dora take a notion to visit you, you must help us out by appearing to be much sicker than you are. But I hardly think either of them will trouble you.”

“I must go now lest I be missed from my room. Jane will bring you your meals, and later in the day when the way is clear for me to make you another visit without fear of detection, I shall do so, for I want to have a long talk with you ;” and in another minute she had slipped into the little attic, closing the panel behind her.

It was night before she came again, and no sooner was she seated by my bedside, when she explained the reason for her delay :

“I found the Captain and his sister were going to spend the evening at the house of one of their loyalist friends, and knowing that would give us the opportunity for several hours of uninter-



rupted conversation, I purposely put off my visit until now. Jane is on the watch, and will warn us if we are likely to be disturbed, so we can talk away without fear."

"I am glad," I responded, "for this has been a long day to me."

"I presume it has," she admitted soothingly; "but tell me what you were thinking about. Have you laid your plans to leave here as soon as your back is well?"

"How can I?" I inquired. "I am bound out to the Captain until I am of age."

"Who told you that?" she asked quickly.

"He did," I replied, giving her the full circumstances under which he had made that declaration.

"He is a worse man than I thought him," she exclaimed indignantly. "He has no such papers, and had no right to strike you, nor can he keep you here against your will."

"You are sure of this, Mistress Coulson?" I cried, sitting up in the bed in my excitement.

"I am," was her positive reply.

"Then I shall leave in the morning," I declared, for I was hot with anger at the imposition which had been played upon me.

"No one can blame you," she said, "but," and



the face she now turned upon me was resolute with heroism, "I would suffer all you have and more for the cause."

"I understand you," I faltered, for in the light which came from her words I felt like a coward. Then to retrieve myself in my own estimation, if not in hers, I added :

"Show me how I can serve you, or the cause, good mistress, and I will stay here though I am flogged every week."

"Spoken like my hero," she murmured softly, and kissing my forehead. "We are now ready for our long talk together."

I cannot burden these pages with the conversation that now followed. Freely she revealed to me the assistance she was trying to give the patriots, and I was amazed to learn that that weak, suffering woman, confined for the most part to her room, had organized and was maintaining at her own expense a regular, though secret, line of communication between Falmouth and all the colonies. No important event could occur from the Carolinas to the Canadian border without its being promptly reported to her, and through her to the chief men of our town. Nor did the scope of her work lie entirely within our own lines. Through her shrewdness both her



husband and his sister were constantly contributing items of news from the British in Boston and in London which were speedily transmitted to our leaders.

Along with these astonishing revelations to me, she showed plainly how I, by feigning submission to the Captain, could be of inestimable service to her and the cause which was so dear to both our hearts.

“If you remain,” she said, “I shall know I have a helper tried and proved, and one who will every day become more indispensable to me and the work I am trying to do. But if you go I have no John Weston to test the lad who takes your place, and, at a time when the cause most needs the help I am giving, I might be crippled for months. Matters are fast approaching a crisis in our colonies, impatient submission must soon break out into open resistance to the tyrannical oppression of the king, and there will be an opportunity in the coming months for you, in the capacity of an humble servitor in this household, to do the cause a service which cannot be undervalued. The question is, whether you will be willing to undertake it?”

Long before she had finished I had come to a decision, and placing my hand in hers I sealed a



compact which terminated only when Falmouth was in ashes, and she who had striven so faithfully to help along the cause of liberty was no more.

I see now after the lapse of all these years that another feeling than that of patriotism entered into my decision. I was glad to serve the cause, but I was no less eager to avenge myself on the man who had so grievously wronged me.

It is not, therefore, the messages I carried to Greele's tavern during the next twelve months, but the instances in which I outwitted Captain Coulson and frustrated his plans that rise most prominently before me as I tell this tale.

I know it was by my hand our town leaders received their first information of the proroguing of the Assembly by General Gage in June ; their first tidings of the "Declaration of Rights" passed by the second Continental Congress in September ; their first account of the Committees of Safety and Supply appointed by the Provincial Congress in the following February ; and their first news of the battle of Lexington two months later.

But as those events have no direct connection with the circumstances which led up to the burning of Falmouth, I only mention them, and tell you rather of the times when I thwarted Captain



Coulson in his plans, and so egged him on to that desire for revenge which culminated in his plot to destroy his native town.

I remember well how elated I was when I made my first successful move against the Captain. It was in August, when the county delegates met in the Court-house, and called Sheriff William Tyng before them, demanding to know whether "he intended to act under the new statute of Parliament which gave sheriffs the power of selecting jurors." Before those stern and unrelenting patriots the unhappy officer quailed, and solemnly promised "not to conform to the requirements of the act, unless by the general consent of the county," a promise which the assembly voted to be satisfactory.

But that that officer did not mean to keep his pledge is shown by an interview he had with Captain Coulson that same evening, and which I overheard. I happened to be lying under some trees at the west of the house, for the night was a hot one and the air in my chamber over the stable was stifling, when I saw him enter the gate. Suspecting his object in coming, and that Captain Coulson would take him into the library, I leaped to my feet and ran around to the kitchen. From there I went into a pantry, whose rear par-



tition formed one of the walls of the library. Here by arrangement with Jane I had some time before made a hole through the plastering, large enough for me to see and hear what was going on in the other apartment, but small enough on the library side to escape detection unless specially searched for.

Barely was my ear against the aperture before the two men came into the room, and seated themselves opposite each other at the table. Then in angry tones Master Tyng told of his summons before the convention, and the demand made of him, closing with the petulant words :

“Now I’d like to know, Captain, if I, a good and loyal officer of the king, must submit to such treatment ?”

“By the eternal, no !” thundered the Tory, bringing his fist down heavily upon the table ; “I will at once write out a full account of this day’s proceedings, and send it to General Gage, asking that a warship be sent down here to enforce your mandates. We’ll see if these rebels dare attempt to manage affairs in this high-handed way any longer.”

“Thank you, sir ! Thank you !” the sheriff responded with evident satisfaction. “Will you send the account by a special messenger ?”



“Nay, that is hardly necessary in this case,” the Captain replied. “The regular post goes out in the morning, and I will forward the report by that.”

“But is it safe?” questioned the other apprehensively.

“You simpleton!” ejaculated Captain Coulson. “Do you suppose I send any letter direct to the general? I shall inclose the paper in a package directed to my shipping agents, and they will forward it to the headquarters.”

“I see,” said his guest, taking no notice of the appellation bestowed upon him; “and I might have known you were too old at this business to be caught napping, Captain. It is all right, I am sure, and we ought to hear from the general in a few days,” and he rose to go.

“Yes,” assented Captain Coulson; “but you’d better stay until I have written out my report of the assembly. There may be some things I wish to inquire more particularly about.”

At this suggestion Master Tyng resumed his seat, and for an hour the two men were engaged, the one in telling, the other in writing out the story of the sheriff’s arraignment. They did not hesitate to prevaricate where it was for their interests to do so, and when they had completed



their work they had produced a document calculated to arouse the anger of the British commander, and lead him to an immediate action.

“There!” the Captain exclaimed as he folded up the paper and addressed it to the general, “I will put this in here with these letters to my agents, and when the package is sealed who is going to suspect it is aught else than what it seems to be—a business matter?”

As he spoke he took from a drawer a small bundle, placed the document he had just written in it, and wrapped the whole up in preparation for the wax. Before he could affix the seal, however, a voice called him from the stairway.

“It is my sister,” he explained, “I will see what she wishes.”

“I may as well go,” Master Tyng declared, also rising. “You don’t need my help in fixing the package. I am greatly obliged to you, Captain. It does one good to know there are a few hearts loyal to the king even here in Falmouth. Good-night.”

They shook hands, and then one left the house, while the other went up-stairs to answer the call given him.

As an inspiration it came to me that I could and ought to secure the message prepared for the



British general ; and leaving the pantry I sped noiselessly through the dining-room, across the hall, and into the library. There lay the package awaiting its seal ; and it was but the work of a moment to undo it, slip out the paper addressed to the Britisher, and put it into my pocket. Then I returned the other papers to the wrapper, and left the bundle in the same position I had found it.

Having accomplished my object I started to leave the room, but heard the Captain coming down the stairs. A glance showed me that my only hiding-place was under the great sofa at the farther end of the apartment, and with a dive I went under it. Nor was I any too soon, for the next instant Captain Coulson entered.

Fortunately he saw nothing to arouse his suspicion that his papers had been tampered with, and proceeded leisurely to seal the package he had left on the table without reopening it. Then he sat down to read, and for more than an hour I was forced to lie there in my cramped quarters. But he at length departed to his chamber, and crawling out from my improvised hiding-place I made my way stealthily to my own room.

The next day I put the paper I had secured into Colonel Freeman's hands, and the commendation he gave me, when he had read it, aroused in



me a determination to intercept the Captain's messages to the British headquarters as often as possible.

I succeeded so well, sometimes in one way, and then in another, that before winter he received a letter from the general asking whether the rebels of Falmouth had become unusually inactive, or he had begun to sympathize with the miscreants. The latter insinuation angered the Captain more than an open reprimand would have done, and he set off for Boston post-haste to learn what his commander-in-chief meant.

I expected that upon his return he would begin an investigation which might reveal the part I had played in the miscarriage of his messages. But, as it proved, the search begun in the city had disclosed a clerk in the office of the shipping agents who was serving the patriots, and to him, though he strenuously denied it, was attributed a work which had actually been done by own hand ; so I providentially escaped detection at that time.

Several weeks after the events which I have related transpired I made another discovery from my ear-hole in the pantry. My employer was closeted with the captain of one of his vessels which was about to sail for England.

"I have sent for you," he was saying to his



caller as I took my place at the aperture, "to intrust to you a special and secret mission. I am, as you know, building a new ship, and she is to be a loyal one from keel to topmast. Every timber in her has been cut from my own woods ; every stroke of labor on her has been done by those who are faithful to the king ; and I do not propose that one of her yards or sails or ropes shall have been made by rebel hands. So I wish to send by you for her entire outfit. You are to store it on board with your other cargo, and quietly deliver it to me on your return."

"Can it be done?" asked his guest as he took the paper on which the Captain had written a full description of the articles he desired.

"Bring the things I have ordered there, and I'll find a way to land them," was the confident reply.

"Very well, sir," the man answered as he departed.

The next time I had occasion to visit Greele's tavern I reported this conversation to the committee.

"We are glad to know of this," General Preble replied, "but tell no one else of the fact, and the moment you hear of the John and Mary's return inform us."



It was a bright spring afternoon, and I was at work in the barn when Captain Coulson came hurriedly around to the building.

"Ben," he called out sharply, "go down to the boathouse, launch the yawl, and get her ready to take me down the harbor. There is a vessel coming up which I think is the John and Mary. I'll join you at the dock in a few minutes."


"Yes, sir," I responded ; and, running up to my chamber for a jacket, I started down the street.

At the next corner I met Colonel Freeman, and after greeting him, said in low tones :

"Captain Coulson's ship, the John and Mary, is, we think, coming up the bay. Will you send Enoch down to the dock to watch ? If he sees me drop my handkerchief over the vessel's side, he will know she has the outfit for the new ship on board, and can report the fact to you before I come ashore."

"Certainly," he responded in the same low way, and, confident I had arranged so that no suspicion would fall upon myself as the informant when Captain Coulson was summoned before the town leaders, I went on to the boathouse. Five minutes later the Captain joined me, and we pulled down the bay.



In a half hour we ran alongside of the approaching craft, which proved to be the one we sought, and, mounting her deck, we came up the harbor on board of her. 

Long before she anchored, however, I had heard enough of the conversation which was taking place between her owner and her skipper to know that the order for the King George had been filled. So the moment I discovered Enoch Freeman strolling about an adjacent dock, I took out my handkerchief to blow my nose, and, losing my hold upon it, allowed it to flutter off into the water.

Watching my friend furtively I had the satisfaction of seeing him soon turn about and saunter up the street, and I knew my signal had been noticed and understood.

It was nearly an hour before Captain Coulson was ready to go ashore, and scarcely were we at the boathouse when General Preble and Squire Parsons appeared, and addressing the Captain, said respectfully but firmly :

“Sir, the town committee has assembled at Greele’s tavern, and sent us to invite you to meet them there.”

If an angry glance could destroy men, the two patriots who stood there waiting serenely for the



Tory's reply would have been annihilated. For never did a man glare more savagely at his fellows ; nor was ever a man more wrathful than Captain Coulson now was. He was for a while too full of rage to speak, and then he cried out :

“ This is an outrage, and you shall pay dearly for it ! ”

“ Calm yourself, Captain, and give us a definite reply,” was Master Preble's cool answer. “ Will you accompany us to the tavern, or shall we send an armed force for you ? ”

If the demand of the patriots had aroused the ire of the royalist, this threat awoke his passion, and for a few minutes he tore around, heaping invective after invective upon the heads of the men who had dared to send for him, until his breath gave out.

Then Squire Parsons took out his watch and noted the time, saying in unruffled tones :

“ You are wasting valuable time, Captain, and we'll give you just two minutes to say whether you will go with us or not.”

Whether it was the cool determination of the men he had to deal with that won, or the figure that Captain Coulson knew he would cut if he were marched through the streets by an armed band, I cannot say. I only know he suddenly



yielded, and with a sullen : “ I will go,” started up the street by the side of the men who had come for him.

When a dozen feet away he turned about saying :

“ You may as well go along, too, Ben ; I shall want some one to witness how I am treated ;” and so I had the pleasure of being present at that famous interview.

We were taken into the long room of the little inn, where the entire town committee, numbering a full score, was assembled, and Colonel Freeman, its presiding officer, thus addressed the Captain :

“ We note, sir, that your sloop, the John and Mary, has arrived from England.”

“ What if it has ? Is that any reason why I should be summoned here ?” was the surly response.

“ That depends on circumstances, Captain Coulson,” the Colonel answered blandly. “ We are credibly informed that this vessel brings an outfit for your new ship and other articles which the Association has decided cannot be landed on these shores. This forces us to ask you to be present here to-day and explain why you openly defy us.”

“ Curse your low, sneaking spies, whether they



are in this town, or across the water!" the infuriated man exclaimed, stamping his foot in his rage.

"I presume that is an admission that our information is correct," the chairman went on calmly, "so, as the representative of this committee I will tell you, you will not be allowed to unload your vessel in our harbor; and you may as well give us your promise here and now that you will make no such attempt."

For some moments the Captain blustered, but found the patriots were inexorable, and so gave his pledge in these words:

"I will not put the cargo of the John and Mary ashore;" and then he was allowed to go.

When we reached the house I took the path for the barn, but he stopped me.

"Come into the house," he said, "I have an errand for you."

I obeyed and sat down, at his direction, in the hall, while he went on up-stairs. He must have been in search of Miss Dora, for I soon heard the low hum of their voices, though I could not distinguish what they were saying. After a while, however, her voice rose shrill and sharp above his, exclaiming:

"And so you, like the great coward you are,



promised the rebels not to land your goods? I thought you had more spunk than that, Samuel Coulson !”

Stung by her taunt, he doubtless spoke more loudly in his reply than he intended :

“ I promised not *to land* the outfit ; but that does not prevent me from putting it on board the King George, for as you know she lies off the yard waiting for her rigging. It appears to me, Dora, that I have outwitted the committee.”

“ And when are you going to carry out your sharp trick ?” she asked scornfully.

“ This very night,” he replied. “ I shall send Ben off to the sloop immediately with a note to her captain telling him to have all in readiness for the transfer, and at midnight I shall begin the work ;” here his voice lowered, and I could not understand what else he said.

A moment later he came down the stairs, went into the library, wrote the note for Captain Williams, and sent me off with it. The fact that it was sealed, and I brought back a sealed reply to him, was, I presume, his reason for supposing I was in ignorance of his plans. Possibly that I might be kept in ignorance of them until the last moment was also his reason for giving me no intimation that he would need my services during



the night. But he called me a little before midnight, and told me that I was to set him off to the newly arrived vessel at once.

I complied with an alacrity that greatly pleased him, and when we had arrived at the ship I turned to and helped the sailors break out the cargo with a heartiness which must have disarmed him of any suspicion that I was concerned with a little event that soon occurred.

The boats of the John and Mary had been loaded, and the trip across to the King George nearly made, when lights flashed out on the deck of the latter vessel, showing she was crowded with armed men, and some one called out :

“Your little scheme won’t work, Captain Coulson. Come a yard nearer and we fire;” then there was an ominous clicking of musket hammers which told of the readiness of those who held them to carry out the threat of their leader.

It would have been the act of a madman to have advanced in the face of those guns, and the order was passed along the line of boats to return to the vessel from which they had come.

But when back on the deck of the sloop her owner swore a great oath that he would put that outfit on board of the King George, if it took the whole British squadron to do it ; and early



the next morning he started on horseback for Boston.

A week later the British sloop of war, Canseau, Captain Henry Mowatt, commander, came into port; and shortly it was known the Tory was on board, intending, under the protection of the warship's guns, to accomplish his sworn purpose.



## CHAPTER V.

### IN WHICH I START FOR BRUNSWICK.

ON the evening of the same day that the Canseau arrived in the harbor the stage from Brunswick stopped before the Coulson gate, and Jack Mandville, the driver, came around to the kitchen door, inquiring for me.

I was eating my supper, but, hearing his voice, left the table and hastened out of doors.

“Hello, Ben,” he said as he caught sight of me ; “I’ve got a letter for ye from your mother,” and he fumbled away for a while in one of the capacious pockets of his coat. At length finding the missive he went on :

“Here it is. Rather soiled in the outside, but all right within. Sort of like some folks, hey ? Well, I have only to say your ma’s having a whole peck of trouble, and will expect ye to come home along with me to-morrow. So be down at the tavern by nine, sharp, in the morning. Good night !” and the rough but honest-hearted fellow went back to his horses.



Wondering what Jack could mean by declaring my mother was in great trouble, I hurriedly opened her note, for it was scarcely more. I have not preserved it, but I remember there were two brief paragraphs. The first announced the death of my baby sister, the hour of the funeral, and a request for me to return home in time for it. The second contained three sentences which I can recall word for word at this late day : “ Though you have been at Captain Coulson’s for a year he has not sent me a shilling of your wages. I am now in sore need of the money to defray the expenses of my baby’s illness and burial. Will you, therefore, show these lines to your employer, and ask him to send me by you the full amount due for your services.”

It may seem strange that I have recollected those sentences so accurately for so many years, but before the reader has finished this story he will see that there were ample reasons why they should have been fastened indelibly upon my memory.

For a minute or two I stood there, gazing at the letter, and trying to decide how to carry out its two requests. The Captain was on board the British sloop, and whether it would be better to go off there and settle matters with him, or to



find Miss Dora and secure leave of absence and the money from her, I could not tell. I dreaded either undertaking. Finally I determined to ask Jane's advice. But when I had explained affairs to her, she shook her head, saying :

"I'd rather risk it seeing the Captain, Ben ; but if you should go off to the ship without consulting Miss Dora first, there'll be trouble for you. So I guess you'll have to see them both."

"I wonder if Mistress Coulson couldn't arrange it?" I whispered ; for it had occurred to me that I could not be in greater straits, and possibly she might know of some way to help me.

"I shall tell her," Jane answered, speaking as guardedly as myself ; "but that cannot prevent you from seeing Miss Dora and the Captain. Should you ignore them for Mistress Coulson, who is not expected to manage the household affairs, the question would naturally arise why you did so, and might lead to unpleasant disclosures. No, you will have to go and see them, much as you dread it, and leave the mistress to help you in some secret way."

Reluctantly I admitted she was right, and sent in word by her to Miss Dora, requesting an interview. She met me in the great hall, asking not unkindly :



“What is it now, Ben?”

Handing her the note I was carrying I said simply :

“I have just received this letter from my mother, Miss Dora.”

Instantly her whole attitude changed. With a dark frown she took the missive, and read its brief contents with heightening color. When she had finished, she threw it from her as though it were some obnoxious insect or poisonous reptile.

“The impertinent hussy!” she exclaimed. “Does she suppose we can spare you two or three days because one of her brats happens to be dead? She ought to be thankful for it, since it is one less mouth for her to feed! Then the idea of her demanding money of my brother! She’ll find he will pay her when he gets ready, and not a minute before!”

Picking up the offensive missive, I said in decisive tones, for I resented the way in which she had spoken of my own flesh and blood :

“Whatever you may think, Miss Dora, I loved my little sister; and my mother’s request is more to me than anything else. Will you grant me the leave of absence and pay me the money, or shall I go off to the sloop of war and see the Captain about it?”



“Why should you?” she screamed in anger. “Haven’t I told you we can’t spare you?”

“I shall go to Brunswick,” I declared with all the firmness I could muster, “if I have to walk every step of the way, and never come back here again.”

Whether my last words brought to her mind the fact that her brother had no legal right to prevent me from going home, or some new scheme had entered her brain, I do not know. But reaching out her hand she remarked with an effort to speak pleasantly :

“Give me the note, Benjamin, and I will inclose it with one I have already written to Samuel. You shall take both off to the war-ship for him. That will be much the best way to settle this unfortunate matter,” and she gave a little forced laugh.

Glad to end the disagreeable interview in what seemed to me then to be a satisfactory way, I passed the letter to her for the second time, and taking it she went into the library. Perhaps she was gone ten minutes, and then returned bringing with her a small sealed parcel, certainly large enough to contain my note and a dozen more of greater size. Handing this to me she said more graciously than I had expected :



“Here it is, Benjamin. Put it into your inside pocket where you cannot lose it, and, however late it may be when you return, be sure to bring my brother’s reply to my room at once. I shall be up awaiting your coming.”

“Certainly,” I replied, for the first time having a suspicion that she was playing some deep game with me. But I managed to conceal my suspicion, and with a cheery, “Good evening, Miss Dora,” started on my errand.

When at the boathouse, however, I looked up an old lantern which I knew was stowed away there, and, lighting its bit of candle from a slight blaze I started with my pocket flint and steel, I examined the package I was carrying. The next instant I gave a low exclamation of delight. The wax had scarcely stuck to the upper fold of the wrapper, and I was able to detach it without defacing it in the least. This placed the contents of the parcel at my disposal, and I soon had the papers in my hand giving them the closest scrutiny.

I found there were only two letters—the one Miss Dora had written the Captain, and the one I had received from my mother; but the former was a very long one. At first I had some scruples about reading this epistle, but when my eye fell upon the name of General Preble near the bottom



of the first page I dismissed every misgiving, and read the lengthy manuscript through to the end. It was a detailed account of the doings of the patriots during the absence of the Captain, and of the rumors which had arisen about their possible proceedings now that the Canseau had arrived, closing with a bitter and vindictive denunciation of certain town leaders and an expressed wish that they might especially be made to suffer now that the means of punishment were at hand.

Fixing the chief items of the letter in my mind, so that I could repeat them to the Committee of Safety, I laid it back in the wrapper, and glanced at my mother's note. On the face of it nothing additional had been written, and puzzled by this fact I turned it over to find on its back several lines in a language I could not understand. Chagrined by this I sat there a moment thinking about what I had better do. It ended in my making an exact copy of the unintelligible words on an old piece of paper I found in the building; then I inclosed the missive with its more lengthy companion, and, by warming the unbroken seal over the candle of my lantern, stuck the wrapper down securely.

An examination of my work convinced me no one would suspect the parcel had been opened,



and putting it in my pocket, I blew out my light, launched the yawl, and started down the harbor towards the sloop of war.

Before I was within gunshot of it I was hailed by the bow watchman, and resting on my oars I called out :

“Sloop ahoy ! I am Ben Mathews, the lad who works for Captain Coulson, and have a message for him. May I come alongside ?”

My request was evidently heard by the officer of the deck, for the next minute he appeared at the larboard rail, saying :

“Come nearer, so I can get a better look at you.”

Resuming my blades I pulled down within fifty feet of the vessel, where the subaltern could see that I was alone, for the night was not very dark.

“All right,” he announced, and giving the nearest sailor an order to throw me a rope.

I was soon near enough to catch the line, and first securing my boat so she could not drift away, I clambered on board.

The moment I was on deck I said to the lieutenant : “Please give this to Captain Coulson,” and I held out towards him the package I had brought.

He took it, read its address in the light of the lantern on the mast, and replied courteously :



“I will do so immediately. Will you await a reply?”

“One is expected,” I responded, and he went aft to the cabin.

Returning a moment later he announced that Captain Coulson would see me presently ; then he left me to be entertained by the members of the night watch. They had already crowded about me, some chaffing me good-naturedly, others asking about the town from which I had just come, and still others boasting of what their cannon would do when once they were turned upon the village.

In the midst of this desultory conversation, I, without appearing to be inquisitive, managed to glean some facts I thought would prove serviceable to our Safety Committee : The Canseau carried eighteen guns, and had a complement of one hundred and thirty-four men. Her commander, Captain Mowatt, was a Scotchman, and disposed to parley with the citizens of Falmouth rather than come to an open rupture ; while Captain Coulson, angry and revengeful, was urging summary measures with the town leaders, a course with which the under officers and crew of the sloop seemed to be in the fullest sympathy.

When a half hour had been spent in this way I



was called aft, and sent down into the cabin. I found the two captains seated at a small table on which the documents I had brought were lying, and it was evident that they had been looking the papers over together. As I entered Captain Coulson whirled around abruptly, and began asking me about the family, the work at the house, and certain of the town matters to which Miss Dora had alluded in her letter. I answered him truthfully about the home matters, and pled ignorance of all village affairs because of my strict attention to my regular tasks. He seemed satisfied with my replies, and continued, certainly more kindly than he had spoken to me for a year, a circumstance which filled me with great surprise :

“So the little one is dead, and your mother wishes you to come home bringing your year’s pay? Well, you may go, and I will meet you at the stage in the morning with the money. Take this letter to my sister,” and he handed me a small missive carefully sealed.

With a bow to both officers I ascended to the deck, and in five minutes more was in my yawl pulling towards the shore. At the boathouse I examined the package that had been given me by the light of the lantern I had used before, but it



was so securely fastened, I dared not tamper with it, and so putting it into my pocket hastened up the street to the house.

It was still early when I arrived there, and finding Miss Dora in the library, I delivered the Captain's letter to her. Then I went to my room, and getting immediately into bed was soon fast asleep.

It must have been midnight when I was awakened by Mistress Coulson. Smiling a little at my bewildered look on first seeing her, she remarked :

“You are going to Brunswick in the morning, Ben, and I wish to send a message to my brother, Colonel Thompson. Here it is, and be sure that it falls into no one else's hands.”

“Certainly, Mistress Coulson,” I replied, taking the small parcel, and putting it under my pillow. Then in low tones I told her of Miss Dora's communication to the Captain, and of the facts I had learned about the Canseau and her crew, asking if there would be any way to send the information to the Committee before I returned.

“I think I can arrange it this time,” she said. “I will write down the items, and Jane can find some way to slip the note into the hand of your boy friend, Enoch Freeman, who will give it to



his father. Good-night and good-by," and then she left me.

I was at the stage ten minutes before the hour for its departure, but Captain Coulson had not yet arrived. Fearful that he would fail me I anxiously waited, but at the last moment he appeared, paying for my passage, and giving me a package addressed to my mother, which I knew by its weight and feeling must contain some money. He moreover wished me a pleasant trip and a safe return, with a courtesy which attracted the attention of every one of my fellow passengers, for of these there were several, and delighted with this show of kindness, and elated over the fact that I was carrying a whole year's pay to my sorrowing mother, I mounted the driver's box beside Jack Mandville, and so began a journey which was destined to include experiences I little dreamed of.



## CHAPTER VI.

### IN WHICH COLONEL THOMPSON MAKES A CAPTURE.

I HAVE sometimes wondered whether any journey of a score and ten miles ever had more mishaps than befell us that day. Before we reached Yarmouth the stage got into a slough of mud from which the horses could not extricate it. The passengers alighted; the luggage was removed; and then Jack Mandville and I worked for more than an hour with stout poles, cut from the adjacent woods, to raise the wheels out of the deep hole into which they had sunk below their hubs. Our efforts were, however, finally crowned with success, and taking on our load again, the journey was resumed.

A half dozen miles beyond Yarmouth, while pulling through a rough piece of the road, one of the forward wheels of the vehicle struck an embedded stump with a force that snapped the tongue short off at the whiffle-trees, and doing a damage it would take a skillful wright to fix.



At this new misfortune Jack lost his temper, and swore at his horses in a way that frightened the women in the coach, and led a tall dignified man among the passengers, whom we all had taken for a preacher, to minister a deserved rebuke.

“I’m sorry, elder,” Jack said meekly under the remonstrance, “but it will take a half hour to tie up that stick so we can pull along to the next tavern ; and then we are in for a good two hours more before a new tongue can be fitted. I’ve had more mishaps to-day than I’ve had before in a year, and I confess I lost myself just a bit, I hope you’ll excuse me, sir.”

He now set himself to the task of temporarily repairing the break, and with my help succeeded so well we were, before long, again on our way ; but at Wing’s tavern we were delayed more than the time specified for the wright, who had with much difficulty been found, to fasten in the new tongue.

Because of these delays it was dark when we reached the Harpswell inn and stopped for supper. I was not going in for the meal, as I had no money of my own to pay for it ; but Jack Mandville looked me up, saying :

“Come along, Ben ; you have helped me enough



to-day for one square feed ; and I mean you shall have it."

So I followed him to the table, where he was as good as his word, and saw that I had all the food that I could comfortably stow away.

When I came out of the house I beheld the preacher standing by the stage, and, as I thought, fumbling with its wheels, though it was too dark to see clearly. But when I came up with him I found he was pulling out his baggage.

"I am going to stop here for the night, instead of going on to Brunswick," he explained, and luggage in hand went back towards the building.

I gave the affair no attention, as it did not concern me, and, mounting the box waited for the coach to start.

In ten minutes we were off, but had not made a quarter of a mile before one of the hind wheels suddenly slipped from the axle, and down went that side of the stage with a bump that mixed up the passengers terribly.

As the forward wheels remained firm, Jack and I were not thrown from the box ; but, dismounting the moment the startled horses were brought to a stop, we hastened to the help of the passengers. It took but a moment to ascertain no one



had been seriously injured, and then we gave our attention to the disabled coach.

I was some time finding the lost wheel on account of the darkness, but at length came back with it in my hand, announcing :

“I have it, Jack, and it isn't broken. What made it come off ?”

“The pin is gone,” he growled, “and that isn't the worst of it. The axle has split in the fall, and we shall have to go back to the tavern for the night. Did you ever see such luck ?”

I was forced to confess I never did ; then, at his request, I went back to the inn to secure help.

A half dozen men returned with me, who lifted the stage out of the road, and loaded themselves with the luggage to take it up to the hostelry. Finding I was not needed, I said to Jack :

“I'm going on home. My mother will expect me to-night, and I'd rather walk the few miles that remain than disappoint her.”

“I don't blame ye,” he replied. “I'd do the same if I was in your place. But for my blasted luck you wouldn't have to do it ; and here's your four shillings for passage money. I didn't deliver ye to your destination and ye are entitled to it.”

I objected, but the honest fellow would not listen.



“I’ve got work enough out of ye, to pay for every mile ye’ve rid,” he declared. “Take the coins, and go ’long.”

With the silver still in my hand I started down the road. Then why I did it I cannot tell, but instead of putting the pieces into my pocket, I took off my hat, and slipped them under its lining. That reminded me of the two letters I was carrying, and, regarding them as ever more valuable than the shillings I had concealed, I put them into the same secure hiding-place, restoring the covering to my head. I know also that I determined, in case I was assailed, to throw my hat from me, trusting to the chance of finding it again, rather than to allow it to fall into the hands of my assailants.

It must have been a special providence guiding me in that resolve, for before I was out of the long woods into which I soon entered, two men leaped from the surrounding bushes, and rushed down upon me. Quick as they were, however, I was quicker, and before they seized me, I had tossed my hat into a thicket on the opposite side of the road from which they came. They did not notice my act, but, having captured me, plunged into the forest, dragging me after them.

I did not cry out for two reasons: I knew it



was more than a mile to the nearest house, and if I screamed there was not one chance in a thousand I should be heard by any one ; then, notwithstanding the darkness, I had already recognized one of my captors as the tall preacher who came down in the stage as far as the Harpswell inn, and a curiosity to know what he could want of me, led me to keep silent.

Through the woods for a half mile the men took me to a wood-chopper's shanty. Here my stage acquaintance held me, while his companion started a blaze in the rude fireplace. When its flickering light was strong enough to reveal the face of my tall captor I remarked with all the sarcasm I could muster :

“ This is nice work for a parson ! ”

“ Sometimes people are not what they are supposed to be,” he retorted dryly.

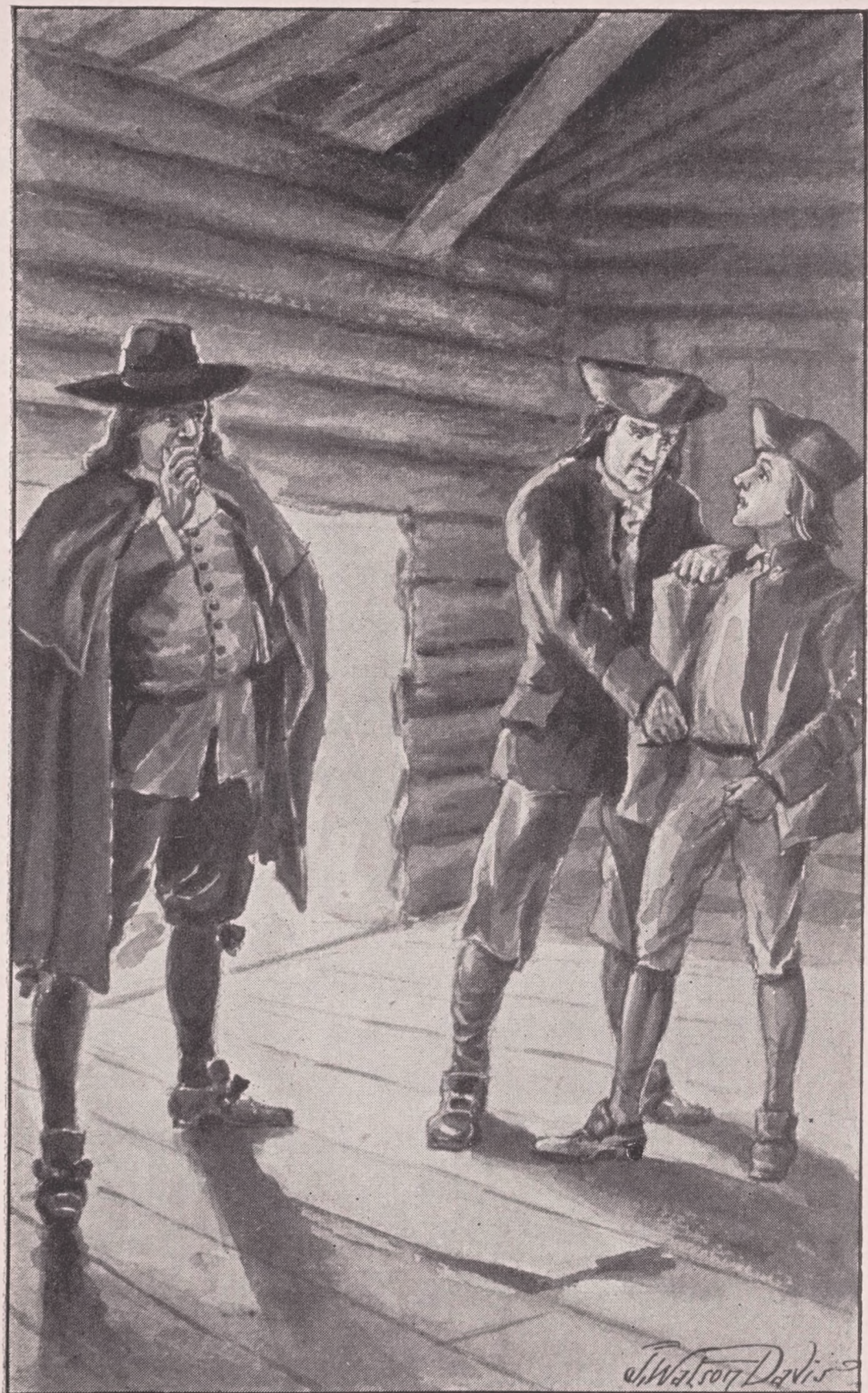
“ What are you going to do with me ? ” I ventured to ask a moment later.

“ We will soon show you,” was the response.

As he spoke the other fellow came to his aid, and they proceeded to search me. Pockets, linings, underclothing, shoes, were all subjected to the severest scrutiny. Then the man who had started the fire exclaimed :

“ He hasn't a single paper about him ! ”





“What are you going to do with me?” I asked. “We will soon show you,” was the response as the fellow proceeded to search me. Page 84.

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“No,” the make-believe preacher answered with an oath as fearful as any he had rebuked Jack Mandville for only a few hours before ; “yet I was told we should at least find a letter on him directed to his mother.”

“And we were to have the money in it,” chimed in his comrade. “What can the youngster have done with it ? ”

“I am more anxious to know whether he carried any other missive,” commented the other ; “one directed to Colonel Thompson for instance,” and he gave me a searching look.

I confess I was startled by this talk of the men. It showed that they had been sent down the road on purpose to intercept me ; and that I was suspected of having the message Mistress Coulson had given me for her brother. But I tried not to let my alarm show itself in any way ; instead I answered with all the carelessness I could assume :

“The letter for my mother was in my hat. What did you do with that ? ”

“Jerushy,” ejaculated my short captor, “we must have knocked it off when we grabbed him down there in the road.”

“Go back and find it,” commanded his comrade sharply ; and with evident reluctance he obeyed.



Meanwhile the false parson and I sat there in silence ; he apparently impatient and anxious, though I do not know his thoughts ; I complacent and jubilant, for I was confident the hat would not be found. Nearly an hour went by before the short man returned, crestfallen and discouraged.

“I couldn’t find it in the road, or between here and there,” he announced. “It is like looking for a needle in a hay-stack in this darkness.”

“Then we will wait until it is light and hunt for it,” the tall man said decisively ; “for mark you, Zeke Winslow, that hat must be found. It was lost purposely ;” and he gave me a savage look.

I laughed.

“Something like your taking out the wheel pin of the stage, and fixing the coach tongue so it would break, wasn’t it, parson ?”

He smiled a little.

“You are shrewd,” he said ; “but you must admit I did my work well.”

“And you will find I have done mine equally well,” I thought, but was wise enough not to say it.

“You did,” I admitted aloud. “But if I am



to be kept here all night, why can't I go to sleep?"

"Turn in any time," he answered curtly.

As there was nothing to turn into but the rude slab bunks at the other side of the hut, I walked over there and lay down. A few minutes later I fell asleep, and slept for some hours. When I awoke the fire was out, and the cabin was so dark I could not see across it. I listened, but heard no sound. I sat up, thinking my movement would arouse my guards, but no one stirred. I arose to my feet, and felt my way slowly and silently along to the one window of the building, and then on to the door. Both were closed, and fastened securely on the outside. I was alone. My captors had departed, leaving me shut up like a squirrel in a box trap.

The simile was in my mind, and I said aloud :

"I have known them to gnaw out ; it may be I can find a way out of this."

I spent what seemed to me a long time in examining the cabin for its weakest point ; the first glimmerings of the coming day were discernible through the chinks between the logs before I decided on my place of attack. This was the chimney, built wholly outside of the hut, and of stones loosely embedded in clay. I was sure that in time



I could make an opening there large enough for an exit ; but could I do it before my captors returned ?

I set to work, using a stick of wood for a bar, and after much effort dislodged the first stone. The opening once started, the task became less difficult, and before the sun had risen I was free.

Cautiously I crept through the forest, keeping a sharp lookout for the returning men. Just before I reached the roadway I heard their voices, and hid in the nearest thicket.

As soon as they were near enough for me to distinguish their words I knew their search had been unsuccessful.

“Our only hope now,” the tall man was saying, “is to make the youngster tell where he concealed it. I believe you are more than half right when you say he suspected me from the first, and was prepared for this capture. But he is still in our power, and we’ll have his hat or his hide. Before we get through with him, he’ll be glad to disclose all he knows, or my name is not Joseph Domette.”

They passed on in the direction of the cabin, and I looked after them saying to myself :

“So you are Joseph Domette, are you ? Well,



I have heard of you, you miserable old Tory, and am thankful I have escaped your clutches."

When they were out of sight I left my place of concealment, and hastened on to the road. Making sure I was below the spot where I had been captured, I entered the bushes on the lower side of the path, and walked slowly along, carefully examining every thicket. At length I was rewarded, and found my hat lodged in a clump of small firs. Its contents were intact, and, with an exultation which I am sure was pardonable under the circumstances, I hurried along under cover of the woods until opposite the next dwelling. Here I again took to the road, and proceeded without molestation to the house where my mother was residing.

The funeral of my sister had been arranged for the afternoon, so there was ample time for me to visit Colonel Thompson before it took place. But fearing my movements might be watched, I decided to send his sister's missive to him, and did so by the hand of a trusty friend.

Captain Coulson's letter to mother, however, was opened the moment I had told her of my capture. There were ten crowns in it, wrapped in several folds of paper, but nothing else. Not a line, not an address, not a word was written there.



“How is this?” my mother inquired, greatly perplexed. “This is not half what Captain Coulson should pay me for your services; and yet there is no word of explanation.”

“He did not intend for you to have even that amount!” I cried. “Those men who captured me were his agents, and that was the pay for their work. Then he would have claimed that he had inclosed the full amount due you, and that the loss was not his but ours.”

“Can it be he is so mean as that?” she queried incredulously.

“You would not ask it, if you knew him as I do,” I went on hotly. “I would not return there again, but for——”

I stopped. I was not sure I ought to tell even my mother the compact I had made with Mistress Coulson. But busy with her own thoughts she did not notice my hesitation.

“I must have the full pay for your year’s work, and a distinct arrangement for your future compensation before you go back there,” she said with a decisiveness I had never before seen her display; and then the subject was dropped for matters which claimed our more immediate attention.

To the surprise of us all Colonel Thompson



attended the funeral of the babe that afternoon, and returned to the house with the mourners. Courteously addressing a few words of sympathy to my bereaved mother, he asked to see me alone.

I had to take him up to the spare chamber, but when we were by ourselves he held out his hands towards me saying :

“I have learned of the good work you have been doing for the cause, Benjamin, and am told you can acquaint me with the exact situation of affairs in Falmouth at this time.”

I informed him of the coming of the Canseau, and the threat of Captain Coulson.

“We’ll see about it ; we’ll see about it,” he remarked rubbing his chin thoughtfully. “I have fifty men, every one trained for service, and I shall take them over to the town to-night. Possibly those doughty captains will not carry things with so high a hand when I get there. Can you go back with me ? I may want to use you.”

“I hardly know what my mother will say about it,” I answered ; and then I told him of my capture, and Captain Coulson’s peculiar dealings.

“There was more to that than the getting of your money,” he declared when I had finished. “Some one wanted to find out if you were bringing a message to me. Can you recall any cir-



cumstance that would lead you to suspect who it is ?”

Instantly there flashed into my mind the strange words Miss Dora had written on the back of the note I had received from my mother. The copy I had made of them was in Falmouth, but I was sure I could recall them, and exclaimed :

“Wait a moment, sir ; I have something to show you,” then I hurried from the room,

Returning a moment later with ink, paper and quill, I laboriously tried to reproduce that queer message. When I had done, I pushed the lines towards the Colonel, asking :

“Can you read that, sir ?”

He studied the scrawl for some time, then he answered with a smile :

“I don’t think you have got it quite right, but it is near enough for me to guess at the meaning. It is French. Who wrote the words and when ?”

Quickly I explained.

“All is clear,” he responded. “This is what Miss Coulson wrote her brother : ‘Let the boy go ; and give him the money—apparently for his mother, but really to pay Joseph and Ezekiel. I will arrange for them to stop the lad. It will be



a good chance for us to learn whether Mary is in secret communication with her brother.’”

“I ought to have known by their sudden kindness they were up to some such trick as that,” I exclaimed with chagrin. “It is only when they want to make a cat’s-paw of me that they treat me decently. I shall learn after awhile when to be on the lookout for them.”

“It seems to me you have won the game,” the officer was good enough to say. “Their agents cannot make a very flattering report. They found no letter for me, and do not know certainly that you had one. Then they did not even get the money intended for them, and your mother is in ten crowns, for I have an order from my sister to pay her five pounds for your year’s service. Here it is,” and he proceeded to count out the money.

“Give it to your mother,” he directed when the gold was in my hand, “and tell her to make no further demand upon the Captain for your pay, as though she meekly accepted the sum he seems to have sent her. Tell her also that my sister will see that you are justly paid for your services however the Captain may treat you. Then she can have no good reason for refusing to allow you to return, and you can accompany me



and my men back to Falmouth to-night. We shall go by boat, and landing on the neck before daylight, shall hide in close proximity to the village until able to accomplish our purpose."

He hesitated a moment, and then bending towards me went on in a whisper :

"I will tell you what that is, for my sister assures me I can rely upon you for help. It is to capture Captain Mowatt the first time he comes on shore, and put him in a place where he will have to yield to our demands, not we to his."

I was dazed for a few moments at the very boldness of this undertaking ; but the more I thought it over the surer I was it could be done ; so I replied :

"I am at your service, sir."

"Thanks," he responded ; and then having told me where to meet him that evening he departed.

I gave the five pounds to my mother, and informed her of Mistress Coulson's pledge. As this removed the principal objection she had against my return, I had no difficulty in securing her consent to accompany Colonel Thompson and his men to Falmouth, though I in no way disclosed their purpose in going.

Promptly at the appointed hour we embarked in the boats which had been provided, and under a



stiff breeze ran down the river to the ocean, and along the shore to Falmouth neck. It was not yet morning when we landed, and, marching stealthily up to Munjoy's Hill, concealed ourselves in the pine woods that covered its top.

After a few hours of sleep, we were called to rations, and then Colonel Thompson sent me into the town to keep watch over every movement of the British, and report it to him either in person, or through some of my boy friends who could be trusted.

It was about noon when I started for the village, but at the edge of the forest I whirled around and went back to the Colonel's quarters in great excitement.

"Captain Mowatt is now on shore," I reported, "and taking a walk up this way."

"Is he alone?" Colonel Thompson demanded, springing to his feet.

"No, sir," I answered; "another officer and Master Wiswall, the Episcopal minister, are with him."

Calling a subaltern the Colonel ordered him to take a dozen men and follow him.

Under my guidance the squad went to a place in the woods near which the British Captain and his friends must pass if they ascended the hill;



and we had not been there ten minutes before they appeared.

Waiting until they were abreast of him Colonel Thompson, followed by his men, strode out of the trees, and confronted the astonished red-coats, saying :

“Halt, gentlemen ! You are my prisoners !”



## CHAPTER VII.

### IN WHICH GOOD PATRIOTS DISAGREE.

AT the command of Colonel Thompson I remained under the trees, for he was afraid the British officer might recognize me as the lad who was in the employ of Captain Coulson, a discovery which would, as readily can be seen, limit my usefulness in the service of the patriots. But I had taken a position where I could both see and hear all that was going on, and so am able to give a truthful account of an event about which there has been so much dispute.

At the challenge of the Colonel, given precisely as I have recorded it, Captain Mowatt whipped out his sword, and with a frightful oath, which I will not put on these pages, demanded : “ Who are you ? By what right do you ask this ? ”

“ By the right of fifty just such fellows as those,” responded Colonel Thompson, pointing towards his men, who had already brought their muskets to bear upon the Britisher and his companions. “ Every one is a dead shot, and can



put a bullet in you before you run a dozen paces. It is therefore a mere matter of good sense to yield to the inevitable, Captain."

The redcoat glanced at the gleaming muskets, and came promptly to the same conclusion. Sheathing his sword, he said sullenly :

"I surrender ; but you, whoever you are, shall pay dearly for this outrage."

At this second allusion to his identity the patriot officer remarked pleasantly :

"I am Colonel Samuel Thompson, of Brunswick, and at your service. Give me the pledge that you and your surgeon will make no attempt to escape, and I will neither bind nor disarm you. In fact I will make your sojourn with us as enjoyable as possible."

The surgeon, who was short and jolly, and disposed to take the capture as a huge joke, here laughed outright.

"Bless you, Colonel," he said between his ripples of laughter, "I never fight. I take care of those who are foolish enough to do the fighting. When you have a job in my line, call on. Meanwhile you'll find me as peaceable as a lamb."

The Colonel bowed, and turned to Captain Mowatt, who with much show of reluctance finally gave the desired promise. Then Colonel



Thompson for the first time gave his attention to Master Wiswall ; and there was no profanity or severity, nor discourtesy in what he said. I am sure that I give here his precise words :

“And you, sir, may resume your walk ; but let it be towards the village, I trust, too, when I meet you again, I shall find you in better company. It throws a shadow of ill-repute over any colonist to be in these times over-friendly with any Britisher, But out of respect for your calling, you are allowed to go,” and he waved him away.

Directing his men to proceed to the camp with the prisoners, he himself now returned to the place where I was concealed in the pines.

“I will make a little change in the orders given you at an earlier hour to-day, Ben,” he said as he approached me. “They will not expect you at Coulson’s before nightfall, and you can, therefore, devote the afternoon wholly to my service. First acquaint the Town Committee with the arrest I have made, assuring them of two things: that it was not my intention to have taken so important a step without consulting them, but the opportunity could not be allowed to pass; and that I am ready to hold an interview with them any time they care to arrange for it. Then you

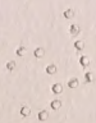


can saunter about town keeping watch of all movements, and reporting to me whatever in your judgment I ought to know. Of course as soon as the capture of the Britisher is known there is going to be a hubbub both on the sloop and on shore."

Following out these directions I made my way down the hill, and through a back lane to King Street on which Colonel Freeman lived. I had an object in this. I knew that in the re-organization of the Committee, General Preble had been made its chairman, and that it was therefore to him I should properly carry my message. But he lived much farther down town, near the wharf bearing his name, and, fearing my employer might have come ashore with Captain Mowatt, I did not care to run any risk in that part of the village, where I should be most likely to meet him ; so I decided to call on the Colonel rather than the General.

It is true the former lived much nearer the Tory, but the Freeman homestead was above the Coulson residence, and I could reach it by a way which would keep me out of the sight of our house ; while there was little danger of running in with the Captain above his own dwelling.

My calculations in this respect were not amiss,





for I reached the Freeman yard without attracting the attention of any one who would regard my presence on the street at that hour as strange. Jumping over the fence in the rear of the dwelling I was pleased to see Enoch at work a few rods away. So busy was he I walked over where he was, and spoke to him before he knew I was there.

“Hello, Enoch,” I said.

“Why, hello, Ben,” he answered with a start.

“I didn’t hear you ! Have you just come ?”

“Into the village ? Yes,” I answered evasively. Then I inquired : “Is your father at home ?”

“No,” he responded, “not now ; but he ought to be here in a few minutes, for he and General Preble were to meet Captain Mowatt at one o’clock for a conference.”

I gave a low whistle.

“What’s the matter ?” he asked, gazing curiously at me.

“I was surprised,” I replied truthfully. “How does it come about that the Britisher is willing to confer with our Committee ?”

“Oh ! things have been slowly leading around to this ever since you went away,” he explained. “First a delegation was sent off to the sloop ; then a delegation visited the shore ; but nothing has been accomplished. The Canseau is right



where she first anchored on coming into the harbor ; the goods are still on board the John and Mary ; and the King George is off the shipyard. Of course our leaders take but one view of the matter : the goods must be returned to England as they came or there will be trouble, and Captain Mowatt has seemed to respect their opinion ; but he was to give his final answer to-day.

“I saw him come ashore two or three hours ago along with his surgeon, and they went to call on Master Wiswall. He is as thick with the Britishers as peas are in a pod. Then the rector and the redcoats went off for a walk, but I presume they will be back in time for the Captain to keep his appointment.”

A click of the front gate turned the line of his talk. “There ! I bet that is father and General Preble now. They would get here first. Let us go and see,” and he led the way around the house.

When we reached the front of the dwelling I found Enoch was right. The new-comers were the Colonel and the General, and the merest glance showed that they were under a great excitement. They saw us, however, as soon as we did them, and General Preble, stopping suddenly on the steps, exclaimed :

“Here is Ben ; perhaps he can give us some



light on this new rumor !” Then turning to me he inquired : “ Ben, do you know anything about the arrest of Captain Mowatt ? ”

“ I know all about it, sir,” I answered promptly.

“ It is true then ? ”

“ Yes, sir ; and Colonel Thompson has sent me to you with a message.”

The two men looked at each other, and it was not hard to see that they were greatly annoyed by this confirmation of the tidings which were already current on the street. But in a moment the Colonel said a little stiffly :

“ Very well ; sir ; come in, and we will hear it.”

He led us into a little office on the west side of the hall, and closed the door. Placing a chair for the General, he took one himself, leaving me still standing ; then he remarked curtly :

“ We are ready.”

“ Shall I tell you merely the message Colonel Thompson sent ? ” I asked ; “ or will you hear my whole story since I left here ? Some strange experiences have befallen me, but I have, as you know, no secrets from you.”

That utterance was a master stroke on my part. Before it the stiffness and coolness of the two patriots vanished as the fog flees before the rays of the sun.



“ We will hear the entire tale, Ben ; and doubt not it will explain some things which we now find it hard to comprehend,” responded the Colonel with his old cordiality ; while General Preble hastened to set out a chair for me, adding : “ Yes, certainly ; tell us the whole thing, Ben ; but, pray be seated, for probably the story is a long one.”

I took the chair, and then began the recital of my experiences from the hour I received my mother's letter calling me to Brunswick. They stopped me when I spoke of the package Mistress Coulson gave me for her brother and inquired more minutely about it ; but finding I knew nothing of its contents, allowed me to go on.

My capture in the woods by the Tories, and their desperate efforts to find the missives I was carrying interested them greatly, but they were amazed to learn that the whole scheme was an effort on the part of Captain Coulson and his sister to find out whether Mistress Coulson was in communication with her brother.

“ It was clearly a special providence that guided you in the steps which outwitted your enemies,” the General declared reverently.

The visit of Colonel Thompson to my mother, and his private interview with myself apparently



furnished my hearers with the information for which they were looking. For interrupting me the Colonel said to his colleague :

“It is evident Colonel Thompson made his move at the suggestion of his sister.”

“What if he did?” retorted the General with marked acerbity in his tones. “He should have consulted us before he began to carry out any plans of his own. As it is he has completely defeated our own purpose, and jeopardized the lives and property of our citizens. I call it an unpardonable interference of an outsider with our town affairs !”

For the first time I understood the real meaning of Colonel Thompson’s last words to me : “Of course as soon as the capture of the Britisher is known there is going to be a hubbub both on the sloop and on shore.” At the time I understood why there should be “a hubbub” on the sloop, but could not understand why there should be on shore. To my mind it was an occasion for rejoicing. But I now saw that the Colonel expected his daring deed would arouse the animosity of friends as well as foes, and for this reason had wished me to assure the town leaders it was not originally his intention to capture the Britisher without consulting with them. It was only



the unexpected coming of the commander, and the unexceptionally fine opportunity to carry out his plan which had led him to proceed without their consent. Hoping, therefore, to conciliate the men before me, and prevent what looked like an open rupture between equally good and true patriots, I took no notice of the General's bitter words, but hastened on with my tale.

They listened in silence until I had finished, but by the lighting up of their faces I could see they were pleased that the captured redcoats had not been disarmed or bound; that the Colonel recognized his act was premature; and that he was anxious to hold a consultation with them.

"It is not as bad as it might be, General," Colonel Freeman exclaimed, when I was done. "Thompson has been hasty, but will, I am sure, not be unreasonable. We may in our interview with him be able to show it will be good policy to let his prisoners go."

"We'd better not act until we know the mind of our entire committee," General Preble suggested.

"I approve of that," returned the Colonel quickly. "Let us call them together at once."

Before they could make a move, however, there came a knock at the outer door, and a moment



later a servant handed in a sealed package addressed to the Town Committee. Opening it hastily the General read it aloud.

*On board His Majesty's Sloop of War, The  
Canseau,*

*The 9th of May, 1775.*

To the Safety Committee of Falmouth :

Sirs :—If Captain Mowatt and Surgeon Small are not released and allowed to return on board by six o'clock to-day, I shall bombard the town,

Signed, HOGG,  
*Lieutenant.*

The two committeemen looked at each other for an instant in consternation. Then Master Preble said :

“ We must act quickly.”

Passing the threatening letter over to me he continued :

“ Take that to Colonel Thompson at once, Ben. It is well for him to know what a hornet's nest he has stirred up. Tell him also that a delegation from our committee will call upon him in an hour ;” then he and the Colonel hastened out to call together their colleagues, while I retraced my steps to the camp on Munjoy's Hill.

On arriving there I found Colonel Thompson



about to sit down to a late dinner under a rude bower his men had erected for his use, and he invited me to share the meal with him.

“Possibly you will be willing to accept what my prisoners have declined,” he said with a peculiar smile; “and you can make your report while we eat.”

With stumps for seats, and a split log for a table, we sat down to a plain and not over abundant repast; and as we did so I handed the Colonel the letter of Lieutenant Hogg, for I regarded it as the most important part of my narrative, saying as I did so:

“The Town Committee, as you will see, has received that note from the executive officer of the Canseau.”

To my surprise he tossed it aside, as soon as he had read it, with the single comment: “Barks well, doesn’t he?” Then he continued: “Tell me what the town leaders say? I am far more anxious to know what they think of my act.”

I was as frank with him as I had been with the General and Colonel, and in a few minutes he knew the exact state of affairs in the village below.

His brow darkened as I spoke, but more with anxiety than anger I thought.



“So I nipped some plan of theirs in the bud?” he mused as I ended. “They look upon my act as an unpardonable interference from an outsider? They expect me to release the prisoners? It looks as though what I took to be a mere mole hill will prove to be a mountain. Still when they come to hear my full plan they may modify their views. We will hope so for the sake of the cause, and the safety of the town.”

More than an hour had passed when the officer of the day announced that General Jedediah Preble and Colonel Enoch Freeman were outside the picket lines, requesting an audience. Directing his men to withdraw beyond earshot of the bower, Colonel Thompson sent his orderly to conduct the visitors to his headquarters. I started to go with the others, but the Colonel stopped me.

“No, Ben,” he said, “whatever difference there may be between me and the town committee, they and I know and appreciate your fidelity. Go over to yonder log, if you care to,” and he pointed towards an overturned pine fifty feet away,” but no farther. I will send my orderly to keep you company when he returns, and both of you will be in call should I need you,” So it happened that Sergeant Thomas Kingsbury and



myself were the sole witnesses of that famous interview.

The meeting of the three patriots was dignified and courteous, Colonel Thompson waiting, after the first greetings for his visitors to speak, and General Preble hastening, as the spokesman for himself and colleague, to present the matter for which they had come.

“We received your message, sir,” he said somewhat haughtily ; “and, after consulting with our full committee, are prepared to ask the immediate release of your prisoners for three reasons.”

Here the General took a paper from his pocket, and opening it, began to read :

“First, because you had no right to arrest them.”

Colonel Thompson now raised his hand.

“I protest,” he exclaimed in clear, calm tones. “Never had a man two more lawful grounds for his act than I have for mine to-day.”

“Name them,” retorted the General abruptly.

“First, because the colonies are already at war with England,” the Colonel went on solemnly ; “as is attested by the armed forces now gathered around Boston ; and secondly, because Captain Mowatt sailed into yonder harbor with the avowed purpose of helping a minion of the king defy the



laws of this colony—an act which in itself was a declaration of war against us.”

He paused, and only the occasional dropping of a pine needle on the roof of the bower broke the deathlike silence, for his hearers knew he had spoken only the truth.

At length, however, General Preble went on with his reading, but less arrogantly :

“Secondly, because your act was unnecessary. For four days the sloop of war has been in our harbor, and has yet committed no overt act. On the other hand her commander has listened kindly to our protests, and to-day, but for your uncalled for act, would have given us his final answer.”

Again Colonel Thompson raised his hand. “May I ask,” he inquired, “if you know what that answer was to be ?”

“No,” the General acknowledged ; “but we we hoped that it would favor us.”

“Then let me show you,” continued the Colonel, “that it is impossible for the Britisher to grant you any favors. However much he may parley with you he must in the end carry out the purpose for which he came here.”

He now drew a package from his coat. “This,” he went on, “is the letter my sister, Mistress Coulson, sent me by yonder lad. It contains an



exact copy of the orders issued to Captain Mowatt by Admiral Graves before he sailed from Boston, and, as you will see, permits of but one procedure. The Captain is to put the outfit and supplies now in the hold of the John and Mary on board of the King George, even if he has to destroy Falmouth to do it," and he handed the paper to his visitors in turn.

Again there was an oppressive silence, unbroken this time until Colonel Thompson remarked grimly :

"I believe there was a third reason why your committee demanded the release of my prisoners. I am ready to hear it."

Slowly General Preble raised the manuscript he held, and, clearing his voice with some difficulty, read the remaining article :

"Thirdly, because your act has already placed the lives and property of our citizens in jeopardy. In three hours, unless your prisoners are released, our town will be in ruins. We urge you, therefore, that, if nothing more, you will parole the prisoners until another day. This will at least delay the destruction of our village and give us time to extricate ourselves from the unhappy dilemma into which your rash act has brought us."

"Do you really believe Lieutenant Hogg will



carry out his threat?" asked the Colonel incredulously when the reading was over.

"We do," replied the General; "and so do scores of our townsfolk. Already they are removing their goods and families from the neck."

"And do you think for a moment Captain Mowatt would keep a parole if I granted it to him?"

"We do," was the quick response.

"Would you two gentlemen be willing to become sureties for him and his surgeon if I allowed them to go?" questioned Colonel Thompson with a twinkle in his eye, for he thought that would settle the whole matter.

There was a brief consultation between the two men, and then General Preble said :

"We would."

"Very well, gentlemen," returned the Colonel, speaking decisively. "It was my intention to make known to you at this hour the whole plan I had in mind when I came here. It included not only the capture of Captain Mowatt, but also his vessel, and the turning of her entire armament to the defense of your town. But I wave my purpose for the present to test two things: First, whether a shot will be fired into your village to-night. Orderly," and he now looked over towards



the log on which Sergeant Kingsbury and I were sitting, "bring Captain Mowatt here."

In three minutes his order had been obeyed, and the British commander stood in the presence of the three patriots.

"The Town Committee have received this note from your executive," said Colonel Thompson, passing the missive I had brought, and which still lay on the slab table, over to the officer.

He read it, remarking when he had finished :

"I knew he would be heard from."

"Is he a man of his word?" queried the Colonel sharply.

"Yes, he'll do just as he says," Captain Mowatt answered with a grin.

"I am glad to know it," responded Colonel Thompson dryly; "but mark you! I am also a man of my word. Therefore listen to what I say. I shall take no notice of that letter so far as Lieutenant Hogg is concerned. He may fire away if he will; but for every ball he fires I shall take off a joint of your body, sir. If *you* care to send any message to him in the light of that fact I give you until five o'clock to do so;" and he motioned the orderly to take the prisoner away.

As he disappeared the Colonel turned to his companions, saying with fine sarcasm :



“There, gentlemen, I assure you that you and every member of your committee may rest quietly to-night. Not a cannon on board the Canseau will disturb your slumbers. Captain Mowatt, though in my hands, is still commander of yonder sloop, and he will see that he does not lose a joint.”

His visitors made no reply. Possibly they were not yet convinced that he had silenced the British guns, but Sergeant Kingsbury and I were; and from that hour, too, we were believers in what is now generally conceded by our best citizens, namely, this: If Colonel Thompson had been allowed to carry out his plans, the goods of Captain Coulson would never have been put on the King George, and Falmouth would never have been burned.\*

The Colonel did not wait long, however, for his guests to speak.

“I said we would make two tests,” he continued; “the second is this: That Captain Mowatt has no respect for his own word, You, gentlemen, declare that you are willing to become the sureties of the two prisoners. Come here, then, at seven o’clock to-night, one hour

\* I find this same opinion freely expressed by several historians of this event.—*Editor*.



after I have made the first test, bringing the written pledges of your willingness to become hostages for Captain Henry Mowatt and Surgeon Jacob Small, and I will take their paroles until nine o'clock to-morrow. But I warn you beforehand that the British commander will break his word, and I shall be obliged to take you into custody. I also warn you that to release Captain Mowatt means the carrying out of the very object for which he entered your bay. But if you are willing to take the risk, I am."

"At seven to-night you shall have our written pledges," was General Preble's curt response.

Then Colonel Freeman spoke for the first time during that conference.

"Colonel Thompson," he said, and there was conciliation in his tones, "good men and lovers of the same cause may honestly differ. Your plans are too radical for us, and in our best judgment are unnecessary. But we hold you no ill-will. As proof of this let me say, we have arranged quarters for you and your troops at Marston's tavern. It will be better than lying out here in the chilly night air, and more convenient should we wish to consult each other. I trust, therefore, you will accept of this offer."

"For the sake of my men and your conve-



nience, I will," was the hearty response. "In an hour I will break camp and follow you into the village;" and then the council which really decided the fate of Falmouth was over.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### IN WHICH CAPTAIN MOWATT BREAKS HIS WORD.

I DID not go down to the village with Colonel Thompson and his men, but a half hour after their departure, putting the parcel of clothing my mother had given me at our parting under my arm, I crossed the fields to the Yarmouth road, and entered the town in that way. I took care to muddy my boots, and, as far as possible, assumed the appearance of one who had made a long journey afoot. I must have succeeded in my efforts for no one I met, and no one at the house, questioned the manner of my coming.

Jane greeted me cordially as I went into the kitchen, and in low tones proceeded to tell me what she thought would be news to me.

“Many have already fled the town,” she concluded, “but Mistress Coulson says there will be no firing, and I believe her.”

“So do I,” I replied heartily without telling her what had led me to that conviction; then I



went to my chamber to change my clothing before I began the usual chores:

I was scarcely in the room, however, when Jane called me saying Miss Dora wished to see me. I expected a close questioning about my recent journey, and, with some misgiving as to how I should acquit myself, obeyed the summons.

But there was no allusion to my absence. Instead Miss Dora, who had the appearance of one that had just come in from the street, and who was greatly excited over what she had seen and heard, immediately exclaimed :

“I want you to go down to Marston’s tavern right off, Benjamin. Some of the rebels have seized Captain Mowatt, and are now holding him a prisoner down there. I tried to see him, but they wouldn’t let me. It will, however, be different with you ; a boy can slip in anywhere. Here is a note. Get near enough to the Captain, if you can, to hand it to him. Should he give you an answer, bring it to me at once. If you fail to reach him, stay around the inn and see what they do with him and Surgeon Small. There is a rumor that the Town Committee is arranging for their parole. Let me know if they are released.”

“Certainly, Miss Dora,” I responded, taking the note and hurrying away with more delight



in my heart than I cared to show on my face. For her orders practically gave me the evening for myself, and would allow me to be at the service of the Committee or of Colonel Thompson should either have need of me.

In her haste Miss Dora had neglected to seal her letter, and before I reached Monument Square, where the tavern was, I knew its contents. It revealed a degree of intimacy between the British commander and the writer I did not suspect, for it began: "Dear Henry"; and ended: "Your Dora." But the rest of it was more practical than sentimental. It proposed the landing of one hundred men from the sloop of war to rescue the Captain and his Surgeon. "Send me a written or verbal assurance that this movement meets your approval, and I will acquaint Lieutenant Hogg with your wishes," was the concluding sentence.

Of course there was but one thing to do with the missive, and in five minutes it was in Colonel Thompson's hands. He smiled as he perused it, and then gave it back to me, saying:

"Put it in your pocket, Ben, and return it to its fair writer, telling her you had no opportunity to deliver it, which will be true, for I shall not allow you the chance."



At this instant his orderly showed a short, thickset stranger into the room, and, believing I was no longer wanted, I arose to go.

“You may remain in the corridor with the sergeant, Ben,” the Colonel said.

“Yes, sir,” I replied going out with Master Kingsbury.

“Who is that?” I asked of my companion when the door had closed upon us.

“It is Colonel Edmund Phinney of Gorham, the commander of the Cumberland County minutemen,” he explained. “He happened to be in town when we came down from Munjoy’s Hill, and has offered to call in whatever additional forces our Colonel may need. I presume they will now decide what companies to send for, and you and I are likely to be among their messengers.”

“I hope we shall not be sent off until after six o’clock,” I remarked jocosely. “I want to see whether Lieutenant Hogg is going to bombard the village.”

“He isn’t going to do it,” retorted the sergeant with a grin; “and I ought to know for I took Captain Mowatt’s letter off to the sloop.”

“What did the Lieutenant say when you gave it to him?” I asked with considerable curiosity.



“Not a word at first,” my comrade replied, “though he looked as though I had done him the greatest favor of his life. Then he handed the paper to a man who stood near him, the old Tory you work for I guess, who also read it, and threw it down upon the cabin table in disgust. It fell where I couldn’t help seeing it, and reading it. It was brief, but to the point :

“ ‘LIEUTENANT HOGG,

‘SIR :—No gun is to be fired on board the sloop while I am on shore.

‘MOWATT, *Commander.*’

“I tell you, Ben, that redcoat don’t intend to lose a single joint, if he can help it.”

I laughed a little at the sergeant’s comment, and then he continued :

“The fellow who threw down the message immediately broke into a tirade in which he denounced the patriots and Captain Mowatt alike, ending up with a demand for the Lieutenant to pay no attention to his orders, but to go ahead with his shooting.

“ ‘It will never do,’ the officer said decisively ; ‘it might cost the Captain his life, or, should he be released, it would result in my disgrace.’ Turning to me he added : ‘Tell Captain Mowatt



his orders shall be strictly obeyed,' and then he dismissed me."

"It looks as though the safest thing for the town would be to hold the British commander a prisoner," I suggested when he was done.

"Yes," he assented, "and when I reported to the Colonel I took care to let him know just what the redcoat had written to his executive. But to my mind there is more than that in those orders. Suppose we armed two vessels and attacked the Canseau, would the Lieutenant in the face of that command dare turn his guns on us?"

This was a new thought to me, and while I was not fully prepared to accept the sergeant's reasoning, I regarded it with sufficient favor to exclaim impulsively :

"I wish Colonel Thompson could make our Safety Committee think so."

"He never will," returned Sergeant Kingsbury warmly. "They are already jealous of him, and will be content with nothing short of the release of the Britishers. See what I tell you."

We were still discussing the matter when the door of the Colonel's room opened, and he himself called us in there. He introduced us to Colonel Phinney, who, addressing the sergeant, said :

"We have decided, Master Kingsbury, to call



in five companies of the militia from Gorham, Windham, Scarborough, Stroudwater and Cape Elizabeth, but we wish to do it so quietly it will not be generally known, until the troops are here. I am told it is safe to leave the management of the matter in your hands, Here are the letters I have prepared for the five captains. Select your men, provide them with horses, and send them off in a way to attract as little attention as possible. This youngster will doubtless do for one messenger, and you will know where to find the others. Report here when your task is complete."

The orderly did his work well, and in an hour five horsemen, unnoticed, left, from different points of the village, for their various destinations. I was assigned to the Stroudwater route, and was the fourth man to get away. The hoofs of my beast sounded like the low rumbling of thunder as I rode over Stroudwater bridge, so swiftly did I go ; nor did my good steed falter in its pace until I stopped at Captain Peter Warren's door.

The brawny farmer read the letter I gave him, by the light of a candle his hired man held, for it was already dusk, and then said :

"Tell the Cunnel he'll hear from me 'fore



mornin,' an' I do hope now suthin' is to be did."

Before I was out of hearing he and his help had saddled horses and ridden away in the opposite direction, doubtless to call his company together.

There was now no special need of pushing my own animal, and I jogged slowly back to town, reaching there just in time to see the two Britishers leave the inn in the company of Colonel Freeman and General Preble, who, after some delay owing to the unwillingness of the prisoners to take a parole for so short a time, had secured their release until nine o'clock the next morning.

Reporting to Sergeant Kingsbury the success of my trip, I hastened home where I returned the note to Miss Dora with the simple announcement that the Captain and Surgeon were already free. Then I went to my room for a rest I was sadly in need of, for, excepting a few hours in the wood-chopper's shanty, and a briefer time in the pines of Munjoy's Hill, I had no sleep since I started for Brunswick.

The following day was crowded with exciting events, though I had little share in them. At an early hour troops began to pour into the town, and soon our streets were filled with armed men. At eight o'clock martial law was proclaimed ; at



nine, Captain Mowatt and Surgeon Small failing to appear, Colonel Freeman and General Preble were taken into custody, and kept as prisoners at Marston's tavern ; at ten a military council was held which voted almost unanimously to undertake the capture of the Canseau, and appointed a committee to "decide on the best means for accomplishing that purpose." Then the council was turned into a tribunal before which Master Wiswall and other citizens were arraigned, and compelled to declare whether they were for the king or for the colonies. The rector vehemently affirmed that he was "an unbeliever in the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance," and went out from the court-house to arrange with the other preachers of the town for the morrow to be observed as "a day of fasting and prayer for the success of the colonists."

While the tribunal was in session two bodies of men, taking the law into their own hands, determined to pillage the houses of Sheriff Tyng and Captain Coulson. More has been made of these attacks, however, than the actual circumstances warrant. Enoch Freeman saw the former raid, and later told me of it ; while I was a part of the second and can speak minutely of that.



The soldiers marched orderly enough down to the Tyng dwelling, and surrounded it, hoping to capture the Tory officer himself. But finding that he had already escaped to the sloop of war in the harbor, they sent in a small delegation to search the house for the sheriff's laced hat and other badges of office. These they carried away "as pledges of the owner's good behavior."

The first admonition I had of the march upon our house came from Miss Dora who fled out the back door, and through the yard, crying out as she passed me :

"The rebels are coming !"

Wondering what she meant I ran into the kitchen, to find Jane had already gone up-stairs. Hastening into the front hall Mistress Coulson's voice called me from above.

"What is the trouble, Ben ?" she asked calmly.

"Miss Dora said the soldiers were coming," I replied ; "but do not fear ! I think I can keep them from coming up where you are. If not, you and Jane can go through the partition into my chamber ; you will be safe there."

"I am not afraid," she responded, and stood there at the head of the stairs, while I threw open the street door.



On the stoop was a burly corporal, while back of him in irregular file were a score of men. One glance into the subaltern's face convinced me I had seen him before. He was Captain Peter Warren's hired man.

"What do you want?" I inquired.

"We are goin' to raid this here manshun," he answered with a grin, and trying to push by me.

"Don't you know me?" I demanded sternly.

He stopped and looked me over. "Be you the chap who came out to the capt'n's last night?" he finally questioned.

"Yes," I said; "and that proves I am as good a patriot as you."

It was clear that he was puzzled; for looking along the house and out into the yard, he asked:

"Isn't this the old Tory Coulson's place?"

"Yes," I admitted; "but let me tell you something. While the Captain is a Tory, his wife is not. She is a sister of Colonel Thompson, and an invalid. Surely you will not disturb her."

"How 'm I to know you tell the truth?" he queried gruffly.

"Because I am a patriot," I responded quickly, "else I shouldn't have been your Colonel's messenger. Or, if you prefer, you can send one of



your men down to the inn, and find out from the Colonel himself."

But that was just what the fellow did not wish to do, and while his men waited impatiently, he pondered over the matter.

"Look here!" he at length exclaimed as though a happy thought had come to him. "You say Mistress Coulson is a patriot; where is she? Upstairs?"

"Yes," I assented.

"Well, that's her part of the house, and we won't touch it," he announced; "while this here," and he waved his hands so as to cover the lower story, "is the Captain's, an' he's a Tory fast enough, so we'll just pillage that."

Considering myself fortunate to save the mistress from annoyance I was about to step one side and let him enter, when there came a cry from outside.

"Here, corporal! we've found a way into the cellar; and it's all full of the Tory's wine and other goods. It is what we are after; come on!"

At the call the subaltern turned, and, followed by the men who stood about him, went around to the west side of the house where the entrance to the cellar was. In a few minutes they had gutted



the place ; and, bringing up teams from some unknown quarter, they were soon busy packing on the vehicles the casks and cases they had secured. Then they drove away, not to drink the wines and liquors as has been often reported, but to carry them into the country where they were stored for some months, and then turned over to the General Court as confiscated property.\*

In an hour they were gone without further disturbing us, but Miss Dora did not return, and, considering myself for the time being my own master, I soon after dinner went down town. I found the military court had hastily adjourned a few minutes before, owing to a rumor that had reached it that there was much rioting among the troops. With the return of the head officers to their companies, however, all tendency to disturbance ceased, and the streets were already as quiet as though there was not a soldier in the village.

But it was easy for a shrewd observer to see that there were two opposing factions in the place. At Greele's tavern the members of the Safety Committee and their friends had congregated,

\* I have seen a copy of the list of these articles as returned to the General Court, showing that Master Mathews is correct in his statement, though some historians differ from him.—*Editor.*



while at Marston's the outside military was strongly in evidence ; and between the two parties negotiations were pending for the release of Masters Freeman and Preble, who were still held as hostages for the recreant Britishers.

As I stood in front of Greele's inn Master Theophilus Parsons came up to me.

"Benjamin," he inquired, "would you be willing to go off to the sloop, and, acquainting Captain Mowatt with the fact that our two colleagues are held as securities for himself and surgeon, ask why they have not appeared ?"

I thought the matter over a moment, and then said :

"If Colonel Freeman and General Preble wish it, and Colonel Thompson does not object, I will do it."

He laughed. "You are as politic as a lawyer ; but come with me, and we'll see."

He led the way over to Marston's, and without difficulty secured an audience with Colonel Thompson and his hostages. To them he made known his proposal, and secured the hearty consent of all parties to it. "You will find he has broken his parole intentionally," was the Colonel's declaration ; while his prisoners were sure the moment the officer learned of their actual arrest



he would hasten to their relief. "He had no idea we would be taken into custody," they said.

"That is no excuse for breaking his word," was their captor's stinging reply.

I went down to our boathouse expecting to find a yawl there, but discovered that the building had been ransacked, and the boats destroyed.

"They won't leave the Captain anything, if this work goes on," I commented as I walked along to Preble's wharf, where I found a skiff and rowed out to the Canseau.

No attempt was made to prevent my approach the moment I announced my name, and, on boarding the sloop, I was taken at once to the cabin, where the British commander and the two Tories, Captain Coulson and Sheriff Tyng, were engaged in a game of cards.

Representing myself as acting wholly for the Captain's hostages I explained the situation they were in, and presented their query.

Captain Mowatt's eyes sparkled as he exclaimed :

"So that stubby fire-eater\* actually arrested my good sureties, did he?"

"Yes, sir."

\* Colonel Thompson was a short, thick-set man.—*Editor.*



“And is still holding them prisoners?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Congratulate me,” he cried, turning to his companions. “I have made the greatest discovery of the times. Set rebel against rebel, and this whole colonial question will solve itself. The cursed rascals will destroy each other,” and then he and his comrades laughed uproariously.

I waited a long while for their mirth to cease ; but in the comments each one now made upon the predicament in which the Colonel and General found themselves they seemed to find new cause for merriment. At length, anxious to leave the presence of those I heartily despised, I ventured to ask :

“What shall I tell Colonel Freeman and General Preble?”

“Tell them,” Captain Mowatt answered with a wink at his friends ; “tell them my washer-woman sent me word it wasn’t healthy for me to come on shore, so I stayed away ;” then all laughed more uproariously than ever.

Indignant as I was at the perfidy and heartlessness of the man, I did not betray my feelings as I bowed and left the cabin.

Fifteen minutes later I reported to the two hostages, without any attempt to varnish them



over, all the details of that interview ; and, chagrined and disappointed, they for the first time admitted the truth of Colonel Thompson's declaration : " Captain Mowatt is not a man of his word."



## CHAPTER IX.

### IN WHICH I BEGIN AN UNEXPECTED VOYAGE.

THE next day was like a Sabbath. All business was suspended ; the soldiers kept closely to their assigned quarters ; and bands of devout men and women frequented the churches to pray, not as had been originally designed for the success of the patriots in their efforts to capture the British sloop, but for the deliverance of the town from the peril that now threatened it.

One unexpected result came from the hallowed influences of the day—possibly the way had been prepared for it by the release of Colonel Freeman and General Preble the evening before : the two opposing factions came to a better understanding of each other ; and by mutual consent it was arranged that early on the morrow all troops were to be withdrawn from the village, and the town leaders were to be left to settle the problems that confronted them for themselves.

“ You see it has turned out just as I told you,”



Sergeant Kingsbury said to me as we sauntered along the shore to the north of the village a little before nightfall. "Through the jealousy of your safety committee nothing has been accomplished by our coming here. The British commander is in a position to carry out his original purpose, and though I'm neither a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, I do not hesitate to predict that he will do that very thing the moment we are gone."

"Why then did he parley so with the Committee?" I asked, raising a question which Enoch Freeman and I had discussed earlier in the afternoon, and with which my chum had silenced if he had not convinced me. "Why didn't he show his hand at once?"

"I can only give you my own opinion about that," the subaltern answered. "I think he desired to get your leaders to do something, or say something, which would warrant his arresting them and taking them to Boston with him on his return. He and that old Tory are schemers, you may depend, and there isn't anything they'd like better than getting such men as Freeman and Preble and Parsons into their clutches. I tell you they'll have to be mighty careful in their negotiations after we are gone, or the Britisher will clap irons on to them."



As the officer was speaking there came to my mind the letter of Miss Dora, which I had opened and read in the boathouse a few evenings before. In that she had suggested the very course of dealing with our town leaders which the sergeant now mentioned. Colonel Freeman and General Preble were named, too, in the list of patriots she had given in that missive; and what was more, they, through the report I had sent them of that document, knew it. Was this the reason why they objected to the seizure of Captain Mowatt? Why they had been so prompt to offer themselves as hostages? Why they were trying to keep the Britisher from his purpose by peaceful measures, rather than by a resolute and open defiance? If so, while I did not doubt their patriotism, I felt sure they had adopted a course which would fail; the redcoat would carry out the purpose for which he had been sent into the harbor; and he would furthermore do what his admiral had not authorized him to do: arrest the town leaders could he find a reasonable pretext for so doing.\*

I was so busy with my thoughts I did not heed

\* It seems to me that this is a more plausible explanation of the attitude of the Falmouth committee at this time than any other chronicler of the affair has given.—*Editor*.



what else my companion was saying until he suddenly exclaimed :

“Look there ! A boat is leaving the sloop of war and coming up this way ! What do you suppose it means ?”

I glanced down the bay, and, though it was nearly dark, saw a yawl containing six sailors and an officer had left the Canseau, and was pulling in our direction.

“Perhaps it is worth watching,” I suggested ; a proposition which met my comrade’s approval, and in another minute we were snugly concealed in an adjacent thicket, from which we had an unobstructed view of the coming boat.

It came slowly as though coveting the darkness which was now fast falling, but at length touched the shore not over fifty yards from us.

Immediately the officer leaped out, and gave the cry of a whippoorwill. It was answered from the woods twenty rods away, and then a man came rapidly down to the beach.

“Good evening, Midshipman Gay,” he said.

“Good evening, Master Domette,” the subaltern replied.

I did not need the latter salutation, however, to tell me who the new-comer was. The moment he spoke I recognized him as the Tory who had



captured me in the forest near Brunswick, and, in a low whisper, acquainted the sergeant with that fact.

“He is the agent of Captain Coulson,” I added, “and if I mistake not we shall now learn of some new scheme of my employer.”

The next words of the midshipman confirmed my declaration.

“Have you secured the fresh meat for us?” he asked.

“Yes,” Master Domette replied; “I got Jeremiah Pote to kill a steer this morning, and it is now quartered and hanging up in his barn awaiting your coming. But you will have to send your men up there to bring it down, for it was too heavy for us, and we didn’t dare to look up help lest we should give the whole job away. There are a good many prying eyes in town just now.”

“Very good,” the officer responded. “Here, lads, you go along with Master Domette and get the beef. I’ll stay by the boat. Be as quick as possible about it.”

The sailors stepped out of the yawl, and drew it well up on the sands; then they followed the Tory into the woods, while their commander, lighting his pipe, walked slowly along towards our hiding-place.



“We must capture that fellow,” the sergeant exclaimed in my ear. “Be ready to jump out on him when I do.”

I was quite sure the act would not meet the approval of the Town Committee, and had my doubts whether Colonel Thompson under the existing circumstances would regard it as a wise thing to do, but had no time to remonstrate with my companion. Already the redcoat was opposite us; in another instant he was beyond us; and with the stealthiness of a cat Master Kingsbury sprang upon him. I was not the one to desert a comrade at such a time and followed closely at his heels.

Before the Britisher discovered his presence the stalwart patriot had grasped him about the neck with a clutch he could not shake off.

“Hush!” he said sternly; “a cry now will cost you your life.” Then he continued to me:

“Here, Ben, disarm the fellow.”

In a moment I had removed the sword and pistol from the midshipman's belt, and he, finding himself outnumbered and without weapons, managed to gasp out: “Don't hurt me! I surrender!”

“That is sensible,” remarked Sergeant Kingsbury, loosening his hold on the officer somewhat,



“and as long as you keep quiet and obey us, we won’t bind you. Come along,” and he led the way to the boat.

“Push off the craft, Ben,” he directed, and I soon had it in the water.

“Step in,” he ordered the prisoner, then he had me follow him, while he himself embarked last, taking up the oars.

“I want you to keep guard over the officer, and run him through, or shoot him down, if he makes any noise or attempts to escape,” he remarked as he pulled down the harbor.

I knew by the direction the yawl had taken under his powerful strokes that he was making for the village, and suspected his purpose. But he soon made it known.

“Do you know where Jeremiah Pote’s barn is, Ben?” he asked.

“Yes,” I answered.

“How long will it take those sailors to go up there and come back with the beef?”

“Nearly an hour in this darkness and loaded down as they will be on the return trip.”

“Good!” he ejaculated. “I can get back there before that time with men enough to bag the whole lot.”

“They will have no boat, and I don’t see how



they will get away," I remarked with a low laugh.

"True," he admitted, "but it will be better to be in waiting for them."

A few minutes later we touched the wharf nearest to Monument Square, and in a briefer time were at Marston's tavern with our prisoner.

I could not tell from Colonel Thompson's face as he listened to the story whether he was pleased or displeased with the capture of the midshipman. He heard the tale, and the subaltern's proposition to go back with a squad of men and capture the six sailors, unmoved; he made no immediate reply when Master Kingsbury was done; he seemed for a few minutes like one who was indifferent to the whole matter.

How long that indifference would have continued, had not Midshipman Gay put in a word, I cannot say. But the Britisher, who had for some time been looking at my face intently, now remarked significantly:

"I shall know you, youngster, the next time you come off to the sloop."

"Then it is better you should not return there yourself," exclaimed Colonel Thompson, with the tones of one who had reached a positive conclusion. "Sergeant Kingsbury, take a squad of



men and capture the boat's crew ! Master Gay shall have company in his sojourn with us."

The command was scarcely out of his mouth before his orderly bounded away ; and I would have followed him had not a word from the Colonel stopped me.

"No, Ben," he said, with a shake of his head, "the less you have to do with this affair the better will be your standing with your Committee. Then, too, should any of the sailors see you, and afterwards escape to the ship, your usefulness as a messenger there would be destroyed. Remain here and entertain Master Gay, while I busy myself with some writing ; I shall have an errand for you when the sergeant returns."

For the next hour, therefore, the midshipman and I were left to ourselves. I found him at first inclined to be reticent, but slowly he thawed out, and at length proved himself to be quite an agreeable companion.

He was telling me of an adventure he had had in the West Indies when the door opened and Sergeant Kingsbury marched into the room, followed by six sailors.

"Here we are, sir," the orderly reported, saluting his commander. Then he told how he had reached the beach with his squad a few minutes



before the arrival of the tars, and secured them without difficulty.

“But those blasted Tories escaped,” he concluded ; “they were some distance behind the red-coats, and saw us in time to drop the quarter of beef they were carrying, and plunge into the woods.”

“It matters little,” the Colonel responded. “I will leave it for the town council to deal with them. Here, Ben,” he added, turning to me, “is a full account of this seizure, though it in no way implicates you. It is now nine o’clock ; I wish you to wait an hour, and then take it to General Preble. Before that time I and my men will be on our way to Brunswick with the prisoners. Captain Mowatt will know by this letter who is responsible for this last outrage, and can come down our way and settle with me, if he cares to do so,” and he smiled grimly.

In a few minutes, by squads of ten, his men were sent quietly out of town to their boats. The Colonel himself was the last to go ; but before leaving he took me by the hand, saying :

“I appreciate your faithfulness to me, and shall remember it. In the long conflict which is before us it may be that I can be of service to you ; if so, command me. Give my love to my sister—”



and then as bold and true a patriot as I ever knew departed.

At the appointed hour I took the letter which had been intrusted to me around to General Preble's house. A servant I did not know answered my knock, and giving the missive to her for the officer, I went home. It was the middle of the next forenoon when Enoch Freeman came into the garden where I was at work, and asked excitedly :

"I say, Ben, do you know Colonel Thompson captured a boat-load of redcoats last night, and has carried them off to Brunswick?"

"Is that so?" I questioned, thinking it wiser to conceal my knowledge of the affair.

"Yes," he went on, "and Captain Mowatt sent word on shore early this morning that he'd burn the town if the men were not given up."

"What will the Committee do about it?" I asked with real interest.

"They sent him a letter Colonel Thompson had left behind, showing that he alone was responsible for the act, and so the Britisher exonerated the town leaders, but declared he should fire on the village if the militia, or 'that outside mob,' as he called it, did not immediately disperse."

"What then?" I still queried.



“ Why, they told the Captain the soldiers had already begun to leave, and in an hour or two would be gone. They also asked him for his long delayed answer about unloading the Coulson sloop.”

“ Did he give them any reply ? ” I asked, and so eager was I to hear his answer, I for the first time since he came paused in my work.

“ He said they would know before noon what he was going to do, and they have already found out,” my friend responded with increasing excitement.

“ What is that ? ”

“ He has sent armed boats over to the King George, unfastened her from her moorings, and is now towing her down alongside of the John and Mary. Come out here in the street, and you can see for yourself.”

I followed him over the fence into the back lane, and was soon where I had a good view of the harbor. Half-way down to the English sloop was Captain Coulson's new ship, and there could be no doubt of her destination.

“ That means he is going to transfer the cargo under the protection of the Canseau's guns ! ” I exclaimed bitterly ; “ and it is just what Colonel Thompson said he would do. Oh ! Enoch, they



ought to have held on to the Britisher when they had him in their hands !”

“I agree with you,” he answered quickly ; “and I guess the Safety Committee think so now. They are in session, but I do not see how they can stop the redcoat from carrying out his purpose.”

“They can do nothing,” I declared, leaving him and going with a sad heart back to my work. Barely had I reached the garden, however, when I heard a step coming around the corner of the barn, and the next moment, to my astonishment, Captain Coulson himself appeared.

“Busy at it, Ben,” he remarked so pleasantly I could not help thinking that Captain Mowatt’s movement had something to do with it. “It is to your credit to be so industrious whether I am here or not. But this planting can wait. I want you to go off to the sloop with me.”

“Yes, sir,” I replied, for I did not know what else to say ; yet I was not pleased with his order. It might mean he was going to put me to work there, a thing I did not relish. Reluctantly, therefore, I accompanied him down to the wharf, all the way debating with myself whether to submit quietly to any demands he might make, or to rebel openly against him.



At the dock a yawl was in waiting in which there were already four men, every one a Tory.

“Get in,” the Captain said sternly, detecting a little hesitation on my part about embarking. Mechanically I obeyed, and sat in the stern with him, while the other occupants took the blades, and pulled off to the John and Mary.

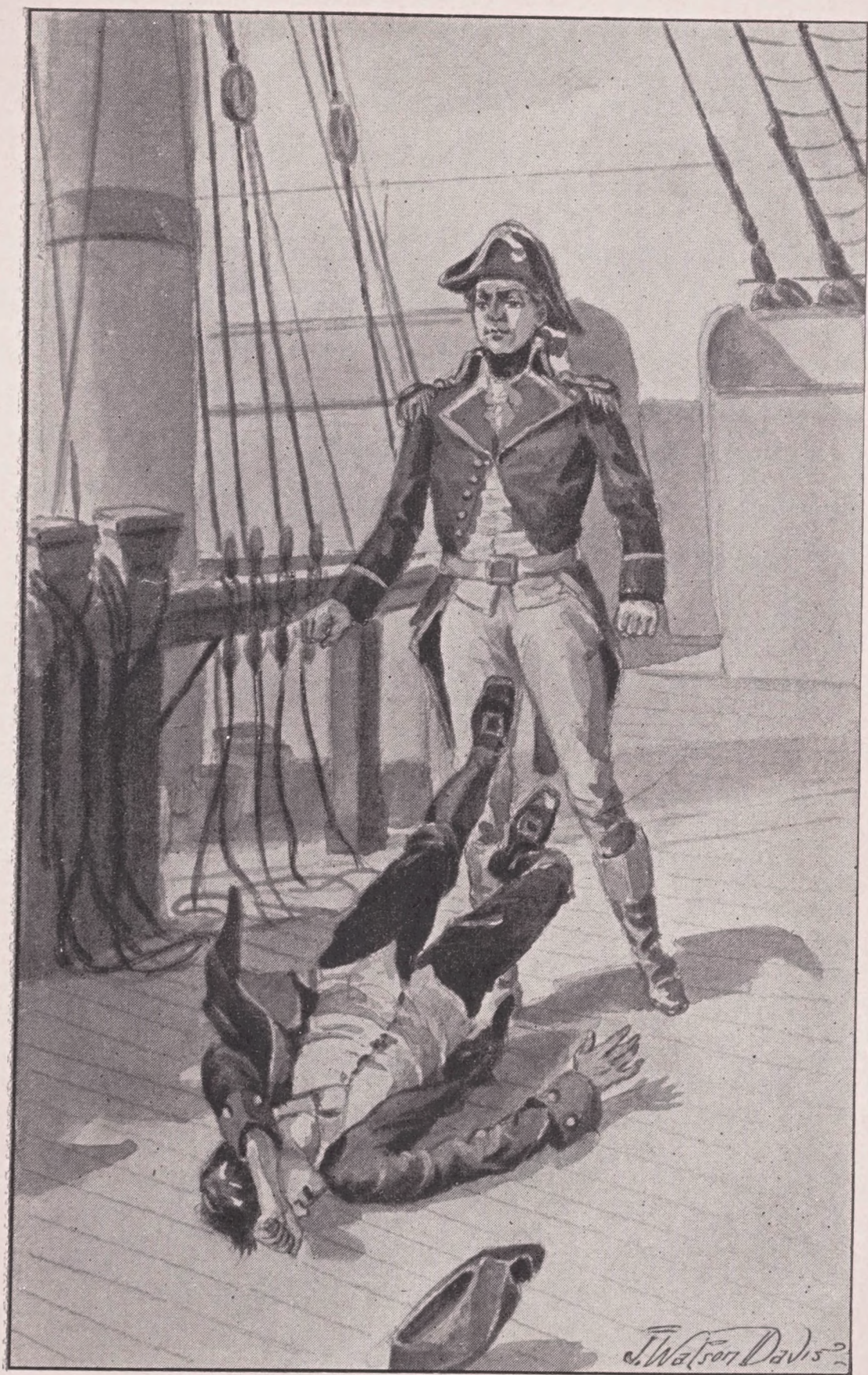
Once there I was to set to work helping to break out the cargo, and for three days, including a Sunday, was kept hard at a task against which my soul revolted. On Monday the transfer was completed, and with a hopeful heart I began to count the moments when I should be sent on shore.

But I speedily found there was a different fate in store for me. Already the sloop of war was weighing her anchor; soon her sails were flung to the breeze; and then an order was given for the John and Mary to take the King George in tow (her masts had not yet been stepped) and follow the Canseau down the bay.

“Am I not to go on shore?” I ventured to ask of Captain Coulson, who was standing near me.

“No,” he thundered, apparently noticing my presence on the quarter-deck for the first time. “You are to go forward, and take your place with the crew!”





I was about to remonstrate when Captain Coulson struck me on the head with his fist, knocking me under the gunwale.

*A Tory's Revenge*







Then seeing I was about to remonstrate, he struck me on the head with his fist, knocking me under the gunwale.

“Go forward, I say !” he screamed as I picked myself up, and arming himself with a bit of rope he chased me down the deck.

I avoided him by hurrying on to the forecastle, where the second mate set me to work helping to stow away the anchor. So in a trice I became a part of the vessel's crew, and started on an unexpected voyage.



## CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH CAPTAIN COULSON IS TWICE BAFFLED.

WE were out upon the ocean, and I was sitting on the heel of the bowsprit nursing my wrath at the way I had been treated, when Sam Green, an old salt, and one of the regular crew of the John and Mary, came along where I was.

“I take it, lad,” he said good-naturedly, “ye don’t care to be a sailor.”

“I have no objection to being a sailor,” I replied, “but I don’t like the way I have been shipped for this voyage,” and I told him how I had been served.

He filled and lit his pipe before he made any reply, and when he did speak I could not see what it had to do with the story I had been telling.

“Lemme tie yer kerchief in sailor fashion, Ben ; now that ye are one of us ye want to get the land marks off of ye,” and he deftly undid my neck-cloth, and retied it in a sailor’s knot. “There !” he ejaculated when the job was finished, and with



the word he dropped a bit of paper inside of my shirt. Then he turned abruptly away.

It was some time before I was able to examine the slip unnoticed, but when I did I found it was not as I had expected, a communication from Master Green himself, but a line from Mistress Coulson, written that morning, and reading :

“It is possible to serve the cause where you are, Ben.”

I understood her. I was to keep watch of the Captain, and report to her or the Committee any movement on his part that would affect the cause. But what had Sam Green to do with it, and how came he in possession of that note ? Was he also a trusted messenger of the mistress, and would it be safe to talk matters over with him ? I determined to take nothing for granted, and leave it for the old sailor to explain his relation to her and the cause whenever he thought best.

In better humor than I had been since I came on board the sloop, I now went about my work, and soon had the satisfaction of knowing I had won the approbation of the mate by my prompt response to his orders.

“That lad has the making of a sailor in him,” he said to Sam Green in my hearing, “and I wish you would take him under your special care.”



"I've did it already, sir," was the sailor's response, and I was certain his answer had a meaning for me which the officer did not comprehend.

I supposed we were bound for Boston, and that was evidently the destination of the *Canseau*; but when off Portsmouth harbor the *John* and *Mary* changed her course, and, with her tow, sailed for that town.

"I wonder what that means?" I inquired of Master Green, who stood near me, and I did it more to test him than in expectation of obtaining any information, for it was the first time we had been alone since he gave me the note.

"I'll tell ye when I find out," he answered in a low tone, moving quickly away, as though to avoid further conversation.

It was not long before he was called to his trick at the wheel, and a few minutes later I was, to my surprise, ordered by the mate to join him.

"I asked for ye," was the old tar's greeting; "I thought 'twas a good time for ye to learn to steer;" then as I took hold of the spokes of the wheel he bent his head down over me and added in a whisper: "Keep ye're ears open; the ole man talks loud 'nough to be heered clear here."

We were favored beyond our most sanguine expectations. It was the middle of the afternoon;



a fair wind was blowing ; and the sail up the bay became too enticing for any one to remain long below deck. Soon Captain Coulson and Master Thomas Ross, one of the Tories who had boarded the sloop when I did, came out of the cabin. Standing with their backs to us, but only a few feet away, they looked off towards the town we were rapidly approaching.

“ We shall be in in good season,” Master Ross remarked.

“ Yes,” admitted the Captain ; “ and if our plan works we shall before night have secured masts and spars for the King George.”

“ I do not see why it will not work,” returned the other confidently ! “ No name is yet painted on your ship, and I shall call her the Greywing. My reason for coming here to secure the sticks is a plausible one. You have but to keep out of sight, and who will suspect she is your vessel ?”

“ And what a joke it will be on the outfitter when she, all ready for sea, unfurls the king’s flag and takes the king’s name,” added her owner with a chuckle.

Sam and I looked at each other, but made no comment. I am not sure I should have done so had the opportunity offered ; for I had not yet decided how far I could trust my comrade. But



of one thing I was certain : Captain Coulson would not get his spars in Portsmouth if I could prevent it.

In an hour we came to anchor a short distance below the village, and a few minutes thereafter Master Ross entered a yawl and rowed himself ashore. It was after dark before he returned. The Captain met him at the rail.

“How goes it ?” he asked.

“Nicely,” was the answer ; and then the two hastened down below.

An irresistible thirst seized me, and, hastening aft to the water-cask, I stood in front of the cabin when Master Ross made his report.

“After some search,” he said, “I found just what you want in the yard of Gilbert Holloway. He will come off to the ship in the morning and take her measure, and says he can have her ready for sea in three weeks.”

I did not wait to hear more, but walked slowly forward, pondering over the problem which I had to solve, namely : how to acquaint Master Holloway with the fact that the ship was the property of a Tory.

I paused near the larboard railing, and looked up towards the town whose lights were twinkling in the distance, busy with my thoughts. Then a



hand was laid upon my shoulder and Sam Green asked in my ear :

“Can ye row, lad?”

“Yes,” I replied, an inkling of his plan creeping into my mind.

He was silent for a moment, and then he said :

“Come here!”

Stepping along to the bowsprit he took hold of my hand and guided it out into the darkness until it touched a rope, one end of which was fastened to the spar, while the other ran down towards the water.

“Boat,” he whispered; “use it ’tween the watches,” and then he left me.

Like a flash I recalled the fact that Sam had taken the boat, when Master Ross returned, to fasten it at the stern of the sloop. Instead he had brought it along to the bow; and now he wished me when the watch was changed to slip into the yawl and visit the village, trusting that in the darkness my going and coming would not be detected. It was a possible scheme, and I determined to undertake it; but how did the old sailor know that was the very move necessary to thwart Captain Coulson’s purpose? Had he guessed at it, or had he, like myself, overheard Master Ross’ report? If so, how?



Puzzle as I would over the matter I had to leave it, for Master Green gave me no other opportunity to converse with him. At the changing of the watch, however, I was in readiness for my trip, and slipping done into the boat unobserved, I drifted away on an incoming tide. When far enough away to make it safe to do so, I took up the oars and pulled rapidly on towards the town. Landing a little south of the village, I secured the yawl, and then hastened across the fields to the nearest street.

My plan of action was already matured. Uncertain as to whether Master Holloway was a patriot or a Tory, I had resolved to call on some member of the Safety Committee to whom I would tell my story, and leave it for him to acquaint the owner of the shipyard with the true character of his prospective customer. With this end in view, therefore, I approached the first house and knocked. I was obliged to rap twice before I aroused anyone and then a voice asked :

“Who are you ? What do you want ?”

“A messenger to your Town Committee,” I replied. “Can you tell me the way to some member’s house ?”

“That I can,” was the hearty response, and the next instant a window opened, a head was



thrust out, and its owner tried to get a glimpse of me.

“Hum ! a boy !” he said. “Well, go up this street to the next one, turn to your left, and stop at the third house on the right.”

“What is the man’s name ?” I inquired.

“Gilbert Holloway,” was the surprising answer ; “he is the nearest member, and you’ll find him as staunch a patriot as there is in the colony. No bad news for the cause, I hope ?”

“No, sir,” I answered ; and thanking him for his kindness I hurried on.

I found the house he had designated without trouble, and soon had awakened the shipbuilder.

“I have an important message for you personally, sir, and one that affects the cause,” I announced.

“I will join you immediately,” he responded ; and in a moment he let me in. Leading me to the living room, he listened to my tale without comment or interruption until I had finished ; then he said :

“I can see no reason why you should make this visit here to-night unless you tell me the truth, and do it for the cause’s sake. Therefore I say this to you : I would cut off this right hand rather than sell a stick of timber to the notorious Tory ;



and hark ye, lad, he knows it ! That is why he would play this despicable trick on me. But I shall be even with him. Return to the vessel. Say nothing to any one. Think it not strange if on the morrow my men measure the ship as though about to step her masts. In the end the rascally loyalist shall not get a spar, and it may be he will lose his craft."

Confident that I had accomplished my purpose in visiting the shore I bade the shipbuilder good night, and returned to my boat. Not over two hours had elapsed since I left the sloop, but as the tide had now turned, I decided to drop down under the shadow of the vessel and watch for an opportunity to board her unseen.

The first part of my undertaking was easy. Seated in the stern of the yawl I sculled it noiselessly down the harbor, guided by the light on the mast of the John and Mary. When within a rod or two of her I took out the oar, and let the boat drift slowly under her bow. Catching hold of the stem I held my craft there, listening intently. Hearing no sound I ventured to throw the painter over the bowsprit, and so secured the yawl. My act passed unnoticed, and elated with my success I sat there, debating with myself whether to mount the deck immediately, or to



wait until the watch was changed. I probably should have decided upon the latter course had not a noise soon reached my ears which was unmistakable—it was a snore.

Drawing the yawl up close to the sloop I stood up in it, and peered stealthily over the railing. Dark as it was I made out a huge form reclining on the deck, shoulders against the capstan, and exactly from that quarter the sound I had heard came regularly and distinctly.

“It is Bill Saunders; he’d sleep anywhere,” I soliloquized; and then I swung myself lightly up on to the bowsprit, and crept down on the deck. Keeping in the shadows I made my way to the forehatch, and descended. The heavy breathing of my comrades assured me I had disturbed none of them, and in another instant I was in my own berth apparently as sound asleep as they.

When Sam Green did it I do not know, but the next time I went on deck the yawl in which I had made my trip was swinging lazily at the stern of the sloop, and I found it hard to persuade myself that my visit to the shore was not a dream. The illusion was all the more real from the fact that the old sailor said nothing to me about the trip, not even when a gang of men from Master Holloway’s yard came off to the King George, and,



with every show of promptly equipping her with masts and spars, measured her from stem to stern. He acted rather like one who was totally indifferent to the matter, and a little piqued by his indifference I remained as reticent as himself.

Captain Coulson, however, though he kept closely to the John and Mary, clearly showed his interest in the shipbuilder's proceedings, and the times he sent Master Ross over to the ship with some special instructions were almost innumerable. Finally Master Holloway, who was directing the men in person, turned on his visitor, saying :

“Now look here, Master Ross, if there is some other man back of you, and you are only acting as his mouthpiece, go and bring the boss over here, and let me have a talk with him. He and I cannot understand each other simply by your flying back and forth between us.”

Frightened by this hint at the real condition of things the pseudo-owner mumbled out some lame apology, and fled back to the sloop, where he repeated the conversation to his employer in my hearing, adding testily :

“If you don't allow me to manage the equipment of the ship in my own way, Captain, I'll wash my hands of the whole affair. I fear now



that you have awakened suspicions which will end in revealing your ownership of the craft."

Though angry enough with both his agent and the shipbuilder to curse them, the Tory chief had the sense to see he might jeopardize his own interests, if he persisted in the course he had been pursuing, and so he retired sullenly to the cabin leaving Master Ross in full charge of his business affairs.

For some reason, however, matters did not progress very rapidly after the measurement of the ship. Several days elapsed and still nothing was done on the vessel. Master Ross visited the shore frequently, but always came back with some excuse for the long delay. But on the fifth morning two boats loaded with what seemed to be workmen were seen pulling down the harbor towards the mastless craft.

"They are coming to tow her up to the yard," Captain Coulson declared when he saw them approaching; "at last something will be done."

But the loaded yawls soon shaped their course for the John and Mary, and fearing he might be recognized the shipowner fled into the cabin leaving his agent to face the visitors.

A dozen yards off the sloop the light craft paused, and a gray-haired man, standing up in



the stern of the foremost one, asked in a loud voice :

“Are you Master Thomas Ross?”

“Yes,” the Tory answered curtly.

“I desire to inform you, sir,” the man went on, “that I am sent here by the Town Committee to take possession of this sloop and yonder ship as the property of one Captain Samuel Coulson of Falmouth. I have a score of armed men with me, and resistance is useless.”

He then gave the word, and one boat dashed alongside of the John and Mary, while the other went over to the King George, and soon both decks were swarming with armed patriots.

Master Ross hastened down into the cabin where the commander of the soldiers found him and Captain Coulson.

“My orders are, gentlemen,” he said courteously, “to hold possession of these two vessels until the Provincial Council decides whether they are to be confiscated or not. We have communicated with the authorities at Falmouth, and they have referred the matter to the Assembly itself. Until some decision is reached, therefore, I and my men will be compelled to remain here as unwelcome guests.”

He had the three men in charge of the ship sent



over to the sloop, and reduced the guard there to a half dozen soldiers. On the John and Mary, however, while no one was confined, a rigid surveillance was established, and an armed force was always on guard large enough to quell any outbreak.

In this manner day after day passed ; no word came from the Council ; and how long the vessels would have been held in that situation can only be conjectured. Their release was as sudden as unexpected : early one morning the British war-ship Senegal, Lieutenant Duddington, commander, sailed into the bay. Believing her purpose was to free the Tory's ships, a hurried order was sent down from the Safety Committee for the patriots who were in charge of them to return to the shore. Before the man-of-war was off the town, therefore, they had departed ; and Captain Coulson, rejoicing over the turn in affairs, ordered out a boat and went over to his deliverer.

He found to his surprise that Lieutenant Duddington knew nothing of the predicament he was in, and that the coming of the Senegal was merely in the way of a general order "to cruise along the shore as far as the Penobscot and ascertain whether the rebels in that region were in a state of quietude." But the Britisher did not hesitate



to turn his coming to the advantage of the well-known friend of the king ; and between him and the Tory a plan was soon concocted by which the Senegal was to accompany the sloop and her tow back to Falmouth, where under the protection of the warship Captain Coulson was to demand the masts and spars lying in his own yard ready to be placed on the new vessel.

It was Sam Green who informed me of these facts when we were alone on the bow of the John and Mary, and then he said :

“ We won’t sail for two or three days yet, an’ ye must find some way to send word home. They’ll have time to get those sticks out of the ole man’s reach ’fore he gets there.”

“ Look here, Sam ! ” I exclaimed, stung a little by his word must, “ why don’t you do it yourself ? ”

“ Cause I can’t write,” he replied shuffling away.

I thought the matter over. A post left for Falmouth the next morning, and a letter forwarded by that to Colonel Freeman would do the work ; but how could I write and mail that letter ?

The first part of the problem was solved by my finding all necessary materials in my berth at the end of our dogwatch. Before we were called at



midnight I had the missive ready, and, remembering that Sam had a boat at the bow for me on the night of my previous trip, I went directly there when I reached the deck. The yawl was not there, and, disappointed, I waited not knowing what to do.

"Gimme the letter, Ben," a voice soon said. I turned and there was Sam beside me, stripped of his clothing.

"I'll swim for it," he explained.

I handed the missive to him, and then noticed for the first time that he carried a bucket in which he had packed the garments he had taken off. Stowing the paper in the pail with his apparel, he swung lightly over the rail, and disappeared in the darkness.

I was nervous all the while he was gone lest his absence should be discovered, but the officer of the deck did not come forward, and I answered all his calls without his suspecting I was alone on the bow.

In two hours the old sailor was back, and, mounting the deck, dressed himself as calmly as though going on shore at midnight was a part of his regular duty.

To my inquiry as to his trip his only reply was :  
"I got there."



A few days later we followed the British cutter out of the harbor and up the coast to Falmouth, where we anchored under the protection of her guns. My first glance, after our sails were furled, was off towards Captain Coulson's shipyard. That glance told me my message had reached the Town Committee, for not a spar was in sight. They had been towed, as I afterwards learned, up the Presumpscot river where the Tory could not get them.

The Captain noticed the disappearance of his timbers as quickly as I did, and, hurrying over to the Senegal, he requested Lieutenant Duddington to send a messenger on shore demanding his property. The answer which came back was short but decisive :

“An order has been issued by the Provincial Congress that Captain Coulson shall not be allowed to remove his effects from the town.”



## CHAPTER XI.

### IN WHICH I MEET TWO OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

CAPTAIN COULSON was standing on the quarter-deck of the *John and Mary* when the message was delivered to him and, knowing his irascible nature, I looked for an outburst of temper which would make the air foul with its imprecations, if it did not assume a more violent form. But to my astonishment he did not utter a word, though he strode over to the railing nearest the village and shook his clenched fist towards it vigorously. It was some time before I realized that he was so angry he could not speak ; but when he turned his face so I could see it, the truth dawned upon me, for it was the face of a demon I beheld. Hatred and rage, malice and revenge, were all depicted there ; and I shuddered at the sight.

Master Ross, who stood nearer the angry man than I did, must have experienced something of my own feeling, for I saw him turn away as though he desired to hide himself from that



awful countenance; while every sailor on the deck became transfixed before that silent but terrible manifestation of wrath.

At length the Captain spoke, and there was a smile on his lips as he uttered the words.

“Master Ross, turn here!” he called out sharply. “Did you ever see a fairer sight?” and he swept with his hand the horizon before him.

It was in truth a beautiful picture: the green fields, the thriving town, the charming bay, all tinged with the rays of the setting sun, made a scene an artist would have rejoiced over.

But when his companion, taking it all in, had responded: “Never, Captain!” the Tory went on with a vindictiveness no words of mine can describe.

“Well,” he said with a terrible oath, “I will not rest until all that is laid in ashes.”

Then turning to me he remarked quietly:

“Ben, I want you to set me over to the cutter.”

It took me but a few minutes to do so, and I heard him ask Lieutenant Duddington, who came to the rail to meet him, if he, in the face of the communication sent off by the Town Committee, would be willing to bombard the village.



“No,” the officer replied, “My will is good, but the orders under which I am sailing would hardly warrant me to take so radical a step. I am convinced, however, that Admiral Graves will furnish you with a fleet for that purpose should you lay your grievance before him.”

“I think so, too,” the Captain replied grimly. Then he inquired :

“Can you remain in the harbor a few days while I make an effort to find my spars?”

“Yes, a week, if you wish,” was the hearty reply.

“That will do nicely,” his visitor said, returning to the yawl, and ordering me back to the sloop.

While I was rowing over to the vessel he gave me another command.

“I want you to go on shore after leaving me. Ben, and visit the house. Bring me word how they all are there ; and—” here he gazed at me sternly, as though to impress me with the fact that he was not to be trifled with—“ascertain if you can what the town leaders have done with my masts. They cannot be far away, for they were too heavy to be carried any great distance.”

Expecting to fulfill only one half of this com-



mission I pulled over to Preble's wharf a few minutes later, where I landed. As I turned into King street I met Enoch Freeman, who said :

"Hello, Ben ! I was on the lookout for you, for I thought you might come ashore." Then lowering his voice, he continued : "Father wishes to see you."

"I was coming around to see him before I returned to the vessel," I responded. "Tell him he may expect me in about an hour," and then I entered our gate.

Going around to the kitchen door I frightened Jane by my sudden appearance, but received a warm welcome as soon as she recovered herself.

"Mistress and I are all alone," she informed me, "and you can go right up to her room."

I found the invalid paler and weaker than I had ever seen her before ; as I looked at her I could not help feeling her days were numbered ; but her zeal for the cause was burning as brightly as ever. She listened to the story of my voyage with the deepest interest, and readily explained about Sam Green :

"He cannot read or write, as he says, but he is a true patriot, and has been my trusted spy for months. He came on shore with the Captain the morning you sailed and I gave him that note



for I knew you would need some message to cheer you up."

Respecting the order to confiscate the Captain's property she said :

"I have the assurance of the Council that so much of it as I need is at my disposal ; but that will not be much, nor will I want it long ; then I wish all that remains, together with what I have of my own, to go to the aid of the Colonies."

Listening to that patient sufferer, and witnessing anew her devotion to the cause, deepened the love I already had for it ; and I take the occasion here to give her full credit for the patriotism she inspired in me. If I achieved aught in later years for the Colonies which is worth recalling, she, and not I, should have the praise for it.

"Where is Miss Dora ?" I ventured to ask, as I arose to keep my appointment with Colonel Freeman.

"Learning in some way that the Council was about to take action against the Captain and his property, she gathered up all the valuables she could find and went to Boston. He will find her there."

At Colonel Freeman's I was not detained long. I assured him Lieutenant Duddington would not fire on the town, but purposed to tarry in the



harbor a while to give Captain Coulson an opportunity to recover his spars.

“He commissioned me to look them up,” I added with a merry twinkle in my eye, “but I haven’t found them.”

“Tell him,” responded the Colonel quickly, “they are in the Presumpscot river, just above the bridge, and let him try to get them if he wants to.”

“You hardly think he’ll succeed then?” I remarked with a laugh.

“I know he won’t,” was the retort, “but you needn’t tell him that.”

Glad that matters had turned so I would appear to have discharged my full mission, I went back to the John and Mary and reported.

A few days later there came a rain ; the night that followed was dark and stormy ; in the small hours a yawl, containing five men, left the sloop, and went up the Presumpscot river for a reconnoiter. It got as far as the bridge, where it was captured with all on board by Captain Samuel Noyes and his men, who were on guard there.

The prisoners were turned over to Captain Wentworth Stuart, who took them to Marston’s tavern, holding them subject to the order of the Town Committee.



This capture placed Captain Coulson in an awkward situation. His chief mate and four of his best sailors were in the hands of the patriots. He could not manage his sloop and her tow with his remaining crew. Under the circumstances, he sent me to General Preble, asking on what terms the imprisoned men would be released.

“On condition that the British cutter and your own vessels immediately leave the harbor,” was the reply I carried back.

When Lieutenant Duddington was consulted, he, because he was anxious to continue his cruise, said—

“Accept these terms now, Captain, but abide your time. ‘It is a long road which has no turning.’”

His advice was followed, and the next day the *Senegal* left for the *Penobscot*, while the *John* and *Mary*, with the *King George* in tow, sailed for Boston.

I think the first impulse that seized me when we arrived at our destination was to flee to the camp of the patriots, which was in plain sight of our anchorage; while the second was to visit the besieged town and send to the friends of the cause any tidings I might learn about the Britishers. As an actual fact, my experience for the



next month was more prosaic. Captain Coulson secured masts and spars for his new ship in Gee's shipyard, and I was kept busy helping the outriggers who were employed to fit the craft for sea.

Closely confined as I was to the vessel, however, I was not without two bits of news to cheer my heart. One was how gallantly our men had fought, a few days before our arrival, on Bunker Hill; and the other was how General George Washington, who had been commissioned the commander-in-chief of our forces, had arrived and established his headquarters at Cambridge. Of course the workmen, who were all Tories, talked these incidents over from the British standpoint, but I heard enough to be confident our soldiers, though finally compelled to retreat through their lack of ammunition, had given the redcoats a good drubbing, and that the coming of Master Washington was not relished by the British officers.

As the rigging of the ship neared its completion my duties on board became less arduous, and I found time to visit the town and become familiar with its streets. Occasionally the Captain sent me on an errand to his shipping agents, or to the house on Carter Street where Miss Dora was boarding.



I think it was the very last day of August when I was given a package of papers by my employer, and directed to carry them to his sister, and bring back as speedily as possible a parcel she would give me in return.

Hastening ashore, I started up the street towards the residence of Miss Dora, wondering what were the contents of the bundle I bore, and wishing I had some place where I could go and make an examination of the papers.

“There may be some news in there of value to our commanders,” I soliloquized.

At that moment I drew near an old building, standing a little off from the street, and noticed that a feeble old man was just entering its door. He made two or three efforts to lift his feet above the sill, and then stumbled and fell. Then he lay there, groaning heavily.

Slipping my parcel into my bosom, and buttoning my shirt over it, I ran into the yard, and stooped down over the fallen man.

“Are you much hurt, sir?” I asked.

He opened his eyes, and, gazing at me steadily a moment, said, with apparent difficulty :

“I fear I am, my lad. Could you help me into the house? I live here all alone, and there is no one I can call to my aid.”



“Certainly, sir,” I replied.

With my help he got up, still groaning as though the effort caused him great pain. Then we made our way slowly, for I had almost to carry him, into the rickety building, and up a narrow stairway to a rear room where he dwelt.

“I am not able to hire but this one room,” he explained in jerky sentences, “and as you see have little in it. That is my only bed—” pointing towards a bundle of straw in one corner on which an old quilt was spread—“will you kindly help me on to it?”

Willingly I complied with his request, saying as I did so :

“Had I not better call a physician, sir? You seem badly hurt.”

“Yes,” he answered feebly; “go for Doctor Tucker on the next street. He knows me and will come though I have no money to pay him.” I started towards the door, but had not reached it when he called out like one who was fast sinking :

“Wait, lad! I may die before you return. Close and fasten the door. I have a secret I must make known ere I die.”

More startled at the thought that the man might die while I was there alone with him, than surprised that he had some secret to reveal, I



closed the door and secured it with a huge wooden bar that stood near by. Then I went over to the rude bed. The old gentleman sat upright the instant I reached him, and laughed aloud.

“Don’t you know me, Ben?” he asked, the next moment, in a strong, hearty tone.

As he spoke he threw off wig and false beard, revealing to my astonishment, but delight, the well-known features of John Weston.

“There is no time for lengthy explanations,” he went on. “I am here as a spy for the patriot army, and have reason to believe that that package you are carrying has important information in it. Let me examine it before you take it to Miss Dora.”

Without a word I took the parcel from my bosom and handed it to him. Quickly undoing it, he ran over its contents. There were several legal documents conveying certain properties of the Captain to his sister, evidently an effort on his part to save them from confiscation; also a schedule of personal investments with parties supposed to be friendly to the cause of liberty, (but who were in reality secret minions of the king), and which in case anything happened to the Captain were to be passed over to Miss Dora. Concerning these Master Weston said:



“I will make a list of them, and perhaps our leaders may find a way to turn them to the account of the colonies.”

Then he took up the last paper, a note to Miss Dora from her brother, and read it through, exclaiming as he finished :

“This is what I was looking for ! I knew that the British commander-in-chief received important news from the other side yesterday, and I was certain if Captain Coulson learned of it he would acquaint his sister with the fact. Here it is : ‘General Gage is to be recalled, and General Howe advanced to his place. I am sorry, for Howe is not over half-hearted in his work, and will try to conciliate the rebels.’

“I will see that General Washington has that information at once,” John continued. He then deftly wrapped up the parcel and gave it back to me. “Go on to the house, Ben,” he directed, “but stop here on your return with any papers you may have received. We may find something in them of value to the cause.”

Promising to do so, I hastened away, fairly running the rest of the way to Carter Street, in order to make up for the time I had lost in my interview with my old acquaintance.

Miss Dora was not in on my arrival at the



house, and I waited some time for her coming, glad I could have so reasonable an excuse for the long while I was about my errand. She kept me fully a half hour after she came, and then gave me a small sealed package for her brother.

Chagrined that Master Weston would not have the opportunity to examine its contents, I stopped for a moment at his room to tell him of my disappointment.

“Let me see the parcel!” was his reply, and I gave it to him.

“Oh! I can open that easily,” he declared, when he had looked at the seal. Then he lighted a candle, and, softening the wax over it a trifle, pried it off of the wrapper without injury.

There was only a single letter within, but it was quite long, and it took John some time to read it.

“There are two or three items of interest in it,” he remarked as he folded the missive and resealed it with a skill which would leave no suspicion that it had been opened. “She has heard from Falmouth, and tells Captain Coulson that the people there think they have seen the last of him, but adds: ‘You and I know better.’ Then she speaks of Captain Mowatt, who is now in Narragansett Bay with his vessel. ‘He will



not be ordered back to Boston before October,' she explains, 'but has assured me he will help you to carry out your plan of revenge on his return.' What can that mean, Ben?"

"He intends to destroy Falmouth," I replied, telling him of the great oath the Tory had taken in that harbor when he found he could not have his property.

"That is clearly what Miss Dora refers to," he mused. "I always said she was as bad as her brother. The idea of a woman gloating over the destruction of a town, and the misery and suffering it will bring to the people! Can anything be more monstrous? Never mind, when in the patriot lines I will see that the authorities at Falmouth are duly warned of the Captain's purpose. But I will keep you no longer. Run in here whenever you have messages between the Captain and Miss Dora, but never know the old man you may see hobbling along the streets. I'm 'Crazy Jerry' then. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" I answered and ran down the steps of the old building, exulting that once more I had helped along the cause so dear to my heart. Reaching the dock I rowed rapidly off to the ship in whose cabin I found the captain and delivered my package to him.



“You were gone a long time,” he said pleasantly, but there was a glitter in his eye I did not understand.

“I had to wait a long time for Miss Dora,” I replied meekly.

“You are sure you did not stop anywhere on the way?” he cried, and again that strange flash came into his eyes.

It was a chance shot, as I now know, but then the pointed question, touching so directly on the actual fact, confused me, and I stood there unable to answer a word.

Apparently delighted at my embarrassment he went on sarcastically :

“I have a friend who desires to see you.”

At those words the door of the nearest state-room opened, and to my surprise and alarm Midshipman Gay came out.



## CHAPTER XII.

### IN WHICH I AM PUT INTO THE BRIDEWELL.

“How are you, Ben?” he asked. “I told you I should know you when I saw you again.”

Still I was silent, for I realized I was at last in a place where even the most positive denial that I was a friend of the colonies would not avail me.

“This officer tells me that you were one of the principals in his capture at Falmouth, and appeared to be in the service of the rebels. What have you to say for yourself?” thundered Captain Coulson the next minute, and striking his fist on the cabin table with a force that made the whole vessel tremble.

Then I found my voice.

“He tells you the truth,” I said. “I have been in their service from the day I came to your house, and I am in their service now.”

Having made this confession, I darted up the stairs to the deck, ran to the nearest railing, and sprang overboard.

I had been delayed so long in the town it was



after sunset when I reached the King George. During my few minutes' sojourn in her cabin the shadows of the coming night had deepened, and I was confident, as I plunged overboard, that, if I could elude my pursuers for a short time, I might make good my escape under the cover of the darkness.

With this thought in mind, I did not immediately rise to the surface of the water, but, changing my course under it, swam around the ship's bow, and along her starboard side to her rudder. Here I raised my head enough to breathe, but kept it so close to the dark hull of the craft it would have been difficult to have detected it a rod away.

I could hear the shouts on deck; the manning of the yawl in which I had come; and the dash away towards the shore, doubtless with the intention of intercepting me when I came to the surface. But the whole search was conducted, as I had hoped it would be, from the larboard side of the vessel. Possibly some one may have thought to glance over the starboard rail, but, if so, the overhanging stern concealed me from his view.

Slowly the moments went by. At first I kept myself at the surface of the water by clinging to the rudder with my hands; after a while, how-



ever, this grew irksome, and I looked around for some less fatiguing method of keeping afloat. Soon I hit upon a device so simple I wondered that I had been so long in thinking of it. I unfastened my belt, and passing it over the pintle above my head, rebuckled it. Then I swung my arms through the loop, and found it an easy and effective support.

A half hour elapsed, but the boat that was looking for me did not return. It was dark enough now to make the effort to reach the shore, and yet I hesitated. Would it be safe to do so before my pursuers returned?

While I hesitated I heard the sound of oars. A moment later the yawl came alongside, and I heard Midshipman Gay, who was in charge of it, say :

“We have found no trace of the youngster, and are confident he has not yet landed. Have you made any search along the hull? He may have doubled on us, and been waiting around here until it was dark enough to conceal his movements.”

“I never thought of that,” exclaimed Captain Coulson, and his tone showed his disgust at his oversight.

“Well, it is the first thing I should have



thought of," retorted the redcoat scornfully. "I took it for granted you would make a search here. I will take a look along the sides, but it is likely we shall find our bird has flown."

His surmise was a correct one, for pulling my arms out of the belt, I sank noiselessly beneath the water, and swam rapidly down the harbor. Not until I was beyond the reach of the sharpest eyes did I venture to the surface for breath, and then only for an instant. Dropping again beneath the friendly covering, I directed my course gradually towards the shore. Rising as often as I needed air, but never remaining long at the surface, I at length reached Rowe's wharf, under which I crawled, nearly exhausted.

It was low tide, and groping along in the darkness I was soon above the water line. Here I removed my clothing, and wrung it out; then, replacing the garments, I crouched there, pondering over what course to pursue.

I had but one friend in the town, John Weston, or 'Crazy Jerry' as he was best known. Would it not be wisest to make my way to his house during the night, and consult with him? He could tell me how to get through the British lines to the Continental camp, where I would be safe.



I quickly decided on this course, but waited until I thought it was after midnight before I attempted to carry it out. Then, creeping out of my hiding-place, I hastened through the deserted streets towards the old dwelling. Twice I avoided the night patrol by slipping into the shadow of some adjacent building, and reached my destination without challenge.

Looking furtively about me to make sure I was unseen, I tried the outer door. It yielded to my touch, and cautiously I entered the structure. How dark and lonesome it seemed as I stood there in the narrow entry! How loud to my excited nerves even the soft tread of my feet sounded! Would John hear me, and, thinking me some unfriendly intruder, strike me down in the darkness?

Ready to make known my identity the moment I knew I was discovered, I advanced up the creaking stairway to my friend's room. The door was closed, and not for a moment doubting it was barred, I tapped gently upon it. There was no response, and I knocked a little louder. Still there was no movement within. Then I rapped loud enough, it seemed to me, to awaken the soundest sleeper, but no one answered me.

“Can he have gone?” I questioned of myself,



and placing my hand on the latch. It lifted, and the door under a gentle push swung open.

It was too dark to distinguish a single thing in the room, but I felt my way along to the rude bed, and placed my hand upon it. It was empty ; and like a flash it came to me that Master Weston had, as he intimated to me in the afternoon he was going to do, undertaken a visit to the patriot lines.

“He will be back to-morrow night,” I soliloquized, “and I am as safe here as anywhere. I will wait his coming ;” then, removing my damp clothing and spreading it over the one chair the room contained, I wrapped myself in the old quilt, and went to sleep.

I slept far into the morning, for the sun was high in the heavens when I awoke. Leaping up with a start, I examined my clothing to find it still too damp to put on. So, making a skirt of the old covering, I looked around the room, hoping to discover something to eat. A box fastened to the walls in an opposite corner, and fitted with a lid, attracted my attention. Going over to it, I raised the cover, and was delighted to behold a half loaf of bread and a part of a boiled ham.

“Evidently this is John’s larder,” I commented, as I appropriated a generous portion of the



articles to my pressing need. I made a hearty meal, and washed it down with a draught of water from the pail which sat beneath the rude cupboard.

By placing my garments where the sunbeams fell upon them, I soon dried them, and re-clothed myself. Then I explored the dilapidated dwelling, finding every room empty, except the one Master Weston occupied.

The day, though a long one to me from my enforced inactivity, passed without incident of any kind. At nightfall I moved my quarters to the chamber directly opposite my friend's, for I deemed it wiser for him on his coming to find his own room undisturbed. Once he was in it, I could make my presence in the building known.

On the bare floor of the apartment I had selected, I at an early hour stretched myself, and, hard as my bed was, slept soundly until I heard the tread of Master Weston on the stairs. Waiting only for him to get fairly into his own room, I crossed the narrow entry, and knocked gently on the door, saying in a low tone as I did so :

“It is I, Ben Mathews.”

“Come in,” he replied heartily, throwing open the door. “How came you here?”

“I have been waiting for you twenty-four



hours," I answered ; then I told him of my reception at the ship on the afternoon I had parted with him, and my subsequent adventures.

"You did one foolish thing, Ben," he remarked frankly when my tale was finished. "Never admit to the enemy that you are in the service of the colonies. Throw the whole burden of proof on to them, and often you will find they don't know as much as they claim to. Howsomever the main question is how to get you out of their clutches."

He was silent for a few minutes, and then continued :

"Doubtless Captain Coulson has reported your escape to the British headquarters, and every patrol on land and sea will be on the lookout for you. I reckon the best plan will be to keep you right here until they have given up looking for you, then we'll run you through the lines. Now, we'll have something to eat."

"I have cleaned you out, John," I exclaimed regretfully, for it occurred to me that he might have been some hours without food.

"I'm glad you did," he responded cheerfully, "it might have spoiled if you hadn't. I can get more in the morning. Let us turn in ; you are welcome to half of my bed."



Barring the door, and removing his wig and false beard he threw himself down on the quilt. I lay down beside him, and we were soon fast asleep.

A week of close confinement on my part now followed. Master Weston, however, went forth daily in his disguise, procuring what food we needed, and seeking for any news that might be of value to our leaders.

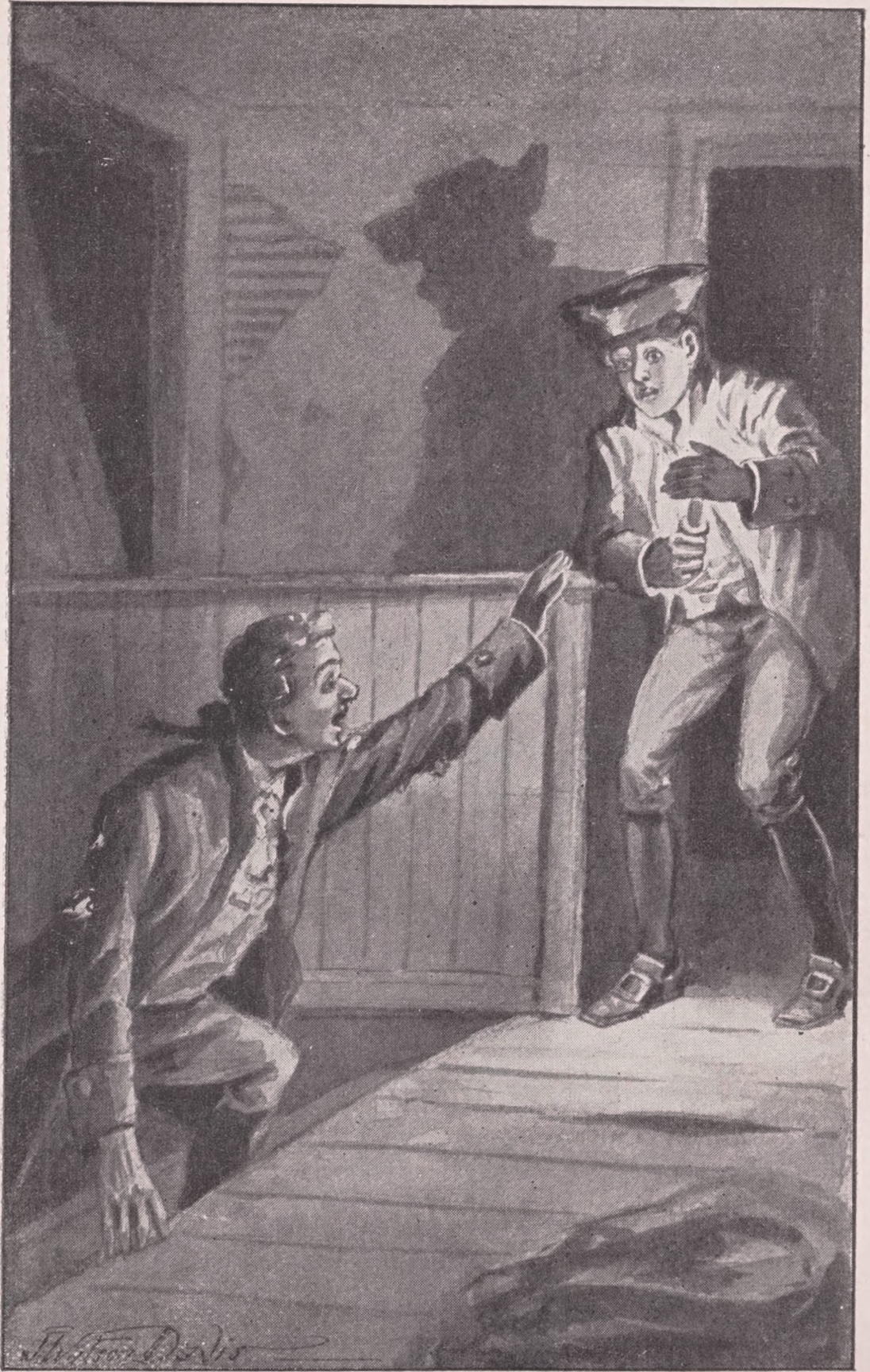
On the eighth day there was a marked change in the weather ; dark clouds covered the sky ; a damp wind, constantly increasing, set in from the sea ; it was clear that a storm was imminent.

“ We are to have a hard night,” John declared as we were eating our frugal dinner ; “ just the kind of a night to run the lines of the redcoats. I also have several items of news to report to General Washington, so if you are ready we’ll undertake to get through before morning.”

“ I am more than ready,” I replied. “ I have stood this imprisonment as long as I care to.”

“ There might be a worse one,” was his answer, “ but it will soon be over now. I’ll go out on the streets for a few hours, and see if I can pick up any additional items of information ; by dark, however, I’ll return, and if the storm is upon us





“Blow out that light quick!” said Master Weston, “I have been discovered.” Page 191.

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we can begin our trip right away. Few will care to face such a tempest as we are going to have, and so we shall run little risk of being discovered."

An hour later he went out ; before four o'clock it was raining hard ; at six the gale was terrific ; and yet Master Weston did not return. I began to grow anxious. Had any mishap befallen him ? Walking through the rooms of the old mansion, which shook and creaked under the violent wind, I peered out of every window, hoping to catch some glimpse of him on his return.

It soon became too dark to see a dozen feet away, and I had about concluded to venture out on the streets in search of John, when I heard him enter the outer door.

Hastily lighting our one candle I hastened into the entry to find him already at the top of the stairs, his hat and false beard gone, his clothing drenched and torn, his whole appearance that of one who had been having a fearful struggle.

"Blow out that light !" was his quick command. "I have been discovered, and we must not stop here a moment. I should not have returned here at all but to save you from the redcoats, who will surely search the place. Do you know where Wind Mill Point is ?"



“Yes,” I answered, having already extinguished the candle.

“Well, go below, drop out of a back window, and make your way there as rapidly as possible. Conceal yourself in that huge pile of lumber which faces Dorchester, and wait my coming,” and he went on into his chamber.

I ran down the stairs, threw up a rear window, and clambered out. In an instant the rain drenched me ; the wind nearly took my breath ; but I pushed on, crossing yards, and avoiding the streets, where I could, and at length reached the Point.

It took me a few minutes, owing to the thick darkness, to locate the lumber pile John had mentioned, but on finding it I went around to the lee side and, pulling some of the boards down so as to make a rude shelter, crawled into it.

I lay there all of two hours before Master Weston arrived, and glad enough was I to see him.

“You escaped them !” I exclaimed exultingly, as he crept into the rude shelter beside me.

“I have so far,” he replied. Then he told me that his long delay was due to his attempt to communicate with a friend of the cause named Israel Vaughn.



“He has a boat concealed somewhere in this lumber yard,” he explained, “and will soon be here to show us where it is. We did not dare to come down here together.”

While we waited he made known his plan for our escape.

“I did not think it safe to go by my old route, lest I should find it was known and watched. This one is all new to me, but Israel is sure we can work it safely under the cover of the storm. Launching the yawl here we will row straight across to Nook’s Hill, and then along under the lee shore to Dorchester Neck, where we can enter General Ward’s lines.” \*

“It is no great distance across,” I remarked, “but it means a great deal to us. I wish we were there now.”

We had been talking in tones scarcely audible to ourselves. Imagine then, if you can, our consternation when a pair of hands were thrust under the boards, catching me by the shoulder, while a voice said :

“We’d rather you would be right here, my hearties.”

\* General Artemas Ward, who was second in command under Washington, and who was in charge of the right wing in the siege of Boston.—*Editor*.



At the same instant another pair of hands reached in from the other side of the rude lean-to and grabbed at my comrade's throat. Springing to his feet, he dashed away the boards in front of him, and disappeared in the darkness, chased by at least a half dozen redcoats.

Struggle as I would, however, I could not throw off my captor.

"It's no use, lad," he cried, clutching me more firmly. "Tim Fisher usually holds all he puts his paws on to."

But I persisted in my efforts to get away, until he, out of all patience with me, threw me face down on the ground, and sat down upon me.

"I usually weigh two hundred and fifty," he chuckled, "but when I'm mad I weigh a ton, and you might as well try to lift a mountain."

I soon came to the same conclusion, and gave up, saying:

"I'll promise not to try to escape."

"Suit yourself, youngster, and you suit me," he responded, rising to his feet.

We waited there a half hour for the return of his comrades, who, to my joy, came without Master Weston. Then I was taken over to the South Battery, where the squad who had captured me belonged, and put into the guardhouse.



The next morning I was taken before the commander of the station, who, looking me over sharply, asked :

“ Why were you and your comrade seeking to cross over into the rebel lines last night ? ”

“ We were tired of being penned up here,” I responded, “ and thought it no crime to get away.”

“ Did you not have some message for the rebel general ? ”

“ No, sir, I did not,” I replied boldly.

“ How about your companion ? ”

“ He must speak for himself.”

Biting his lips a moment to conceal his annoyance, the officer inquired :

“ Who are you ? ”

“ Benjamin Mathews.”

He consulted a paper lying on the table before him.

“ Ah ! the lad who escaped from Captain Coulson ? ”

“ I made no reply, as I thought none necessary ; and evidently he did not, for he immediately questioned :

“ And who was your companion ? ”

“ I have nothing to say,” was my answer.

“ Was he not the man who has been known



about town as 'Crazy Jerry'?" he queried significantly.

I was silent.

"Here," he said to a subaltern who stood near him, "take this fellow up to the Bridewell where he will be safe until I can report his case to his excellency."

The orderly disappeared, to return in a moment with the same squad that had captured me, and, guarded by it, I was marched up King Street, then past the Burying Place to the gloomy prison in which so many of our brave men were already languishing.

My heart sank like lead within me as its heavy door closed upon me, for I knew there was little hope of escape to any who entered there.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN WHICH I BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BRITISH FLEET.

OWING to the crowded condition of the prison I was thrust into a cell, originally intended for a single person, but already occupied by three. Two of these were men whose long, unkempt locks, and thin and pallid faces, told of a long confinement within those damp walls ; while the other was evidently, like myself, a recent arrival there, and the moment I glanced at him I knew I had seen him before. He was Master Ezekiel Goodyear, who had accompanied Captain Coulson to Brunswick that day I first met the Tory.

Having recognized him so readily, I did not think but that he would remember me, and so held out my hand, as he and his companions crowded about me, saying :

“How are you, Master Goodyear ? I did not expect to see you here.”

He looked me over in evident surprise, and then, shaking his head, replied :



"I give it up, lad. I can't place ye."

"I am Ben Mathews, of Brunswick," I explained. "You came out to our house with Captain Coulson to tell us of the death of my father."

"So I did, youngster. Bless ye, how ye've grown! An' to think we should both fetch up here! Ye must tell me how it came 'bout, an' I'll spin ye my yarn. Fust, though, Zeke Goodyear mustn't forget his manners. This 's Joseph Bailey, an' that 's Daniel Knight. They ain't very hansum, but I wish I had their grit."

I understood what he meant by the first words those two men spoke to me. As I put out my hand towards them in acknowledgment of Master Goodyear's crude introduction, they cried simultaneously :

"Tell us, lad, are there any new tidings of the cause?"

"You have heard of the battle of Bunker's Hill, and the coming of General Washington?" I questioned.

"Yes," they responded, "Master Goodyear told us about them."

"Then the only new item of information I can give you," I went on, "is this : General Gage is soon to be removed from his position as Com-



mander-in-chief of the British forces and General Howe is to be put in his place."

"Thank God for that !" they exclaimed reverently ; "it may mean our release if we can secure a hearing."

Then I learned that they had been thrown into prison more than twelve months before because they had boldly denounced General Gage's enforcement of the Port Act. Offered their liberty again and again if they would only take the oath of allegiance to the king, they had steadfastly refused, preferring to die there in the jail rather than prove false to the cause they loved. Their patient and heroic endurance of the scanty prison fare and the unhealthy condition of their dungeon, after those long months of confinement, shut my own lips against all complaint during the weeks I was called to share their cell.

There was a single stool in the room, and, placing me on that, as a sort of throne of honor, my comrades listened to my tale. I related only enough for them to understand that I had been in the secret service of the patriots through the long months I was at work for Captain Coulson, and now, detected and captured, I was in the Bridewell for safe-keeping until the British commander decided my fate.



“I want to know if ye’ve ben a workin’ for the ole man ever sence I saw ye before?” Master Goodyear remarked when my recital was over. “Waal, I reckon ye know by this time what sort of a critt’r he is.”

“I know him well enough to believe their isn’t but one good act to his credit in all his life,” I retorted with some bitterness.

“Gosh! I didn’t ’spose thar was one,” ejaculated Ezekiel in amazement. “What was it?”

“He paid my mother double the wages due my father,” I answered.

“How much did he give her?” the sailor persisted.

“Two pounds,” I replied, “and, as by your own tell, Master Goodyear, my father fell overboard when only two weeks out, you can see that the Captain for once did a generous thing, though I admit he’s more than made it up since.”

“I don’t see it,” he declared. “Your father was two weeks out on his way home, an’ as we’d ben six weeks in Liverpool, besides the voyage over, the ole man didn’t give ye half pay. I ’spishuned it, for I never knew the Capt’n to pay a dollar he could get rid of, ’speshully if ’twas due a patriot, as your pa was.”

Nothing in all the Captain’s dealings with me



had ever made me so angry as I was then. That he, in the hour when my mother's heart was bleeding with sorrow, had deliberately cheated her out of what was her due, pretending all the while to be her friend and to deal generously with her, seemed to me to be a degree of perfidy beside which all of his subsequent acts sank into insignificance. The moment I could find my voice I said, and I meant it :

“If I live, and he lives, he shall yet pay me every dollar due my father.”

“I don't blame ye for sayin' it, lad,” Master Goodyear remarked, “an' I hope ye'll get it. But now I'd better spin my yarn.”

Beginning with his return to Falmouth along with Captain Coulson, he told of a voyage to England, and then down to the coast of Africa, where he had been shipwrecked. Picked up by a French vessel he had at length landed at Calais, whence he made his way across the channel to Dover. Destitute, and ignorant of the real state of affairs in the colonies, he enlisted in the British navy, and was assigned to the warship *Cat*, bound for Boston.

“I hadn't ben on the craft an hour,” he went on to say, “'fore I heerd of the fightin' that was goin' on over here, an' knowin' I was on the



wrong side, deserted. They ketched me, an' put me into the ship's brig till we sailed. Soon as we sighted East Point on this side I tried the same trick, but was ketched agin, an' sent down to the pen. Stayin' thar grew tiresum, an' so I tore up my shirt and started a fire under the door. When they saw the smoke they pulled me out in a jiffy, an' took me 'fore the Capt'n. He'd got a notion by that time that I was a spy, an' had ben burnin' up valooble papers lestwise they should be found. So he ups an' sends me to the Gen'ral, who was mad 'cause I wouldn't own up, an' clapped me in here 'til I 'larned sense,' as he expressed it, an' here I be."

I had something of the same experience when on the next day I was taken before General Gage. He asked me nothing about myself, perhaps because he knew all about me from Captain Coulson, but tried to learn from me who my companion, on the night I had been captured, was. I refused to give him any information on that point, and vexed at my obstinacy he finally sent me back to the Bridewell with the unpleasant admonition :

"I'll give you a week to find sense enough to save your own life by telling me who that fellow was that escaped us. If you don't do it in that time, you shall hang in his place."



I talked the matter over with my companions on my return to the jail, and they were unanimous in their opinion that I ought to disclose Master Weston's identity to save my own life.

"He has made good his escape, and to tell who he is can be of little value to the enemy," Master Bailey said.

"Put in a bid for your liberty as well as your life," advised Master Knight. "The Britisher may give you both for an item of information that won't be worth a farthing to him after he gets it."

I waited, therefore, quite complacently for the allotted time to pass away. But the week went by; the next followed; the month ran out; and still I was not sent for. No news of what was transpiring reached us within those prison walls. Had we known that General Gage was already superseded by General Howe I think we all should have taken new heart.\* Ignorant as we were of events, therefore, it seemed like a ray of sunlight breaking instantaneously through heavy clouds when one bright October morning our cell door was thrown open, and a British officer stood there with a roll of paper in his hand.

"Joseph Bailey and Daniel Knight," he called out.

\* This occurred about October 1st, 1775.—*Editor.*



Trembling all over in their excitement at the unusual circumstance, and wondering whether the summons meant good or evil, my comrades hastened forward and responded to their names.

"You are discharged," he said brusquely, and motioning them out into the corridor where a turnkey was waiting who conducted them away.

"Ezekiel Goodyear," the redcoat read off next.

"Here I be," the old sailor responded, stepping forward with hope depicted on his rugged face.

"You are ordered back to your vessel to serve out the time of your enlistment," was the announcement, and a file of soldiers appeared and marched him down the narrow passage towards the street door.

"Benjamin Mathews," the major now called, referring for the third time to the paper he held.

"Here, sir," I answered, though I had given up all hope of release since I heard Master Goodyear's sentence.

"You are sent back to the service of Captain Coulson," the Britisher declared, and I was given into the charge of Midshipman Gay (though he now wore the uniform of a lieutenant), who to my surprise was waiting outside with a squad of



marines, and he took me off to the King George, from which I had escaped six weeks before.

Before I reached the vessel, however, I became aware of the transformation she had undergone during my absence. Heavy bulwarks had been added; fourteen swivels and a bow chaser mounted; her crew increased to fully four score; while officers and men, from Captain Coulson down, were in the garb of the British navy. She was a full-fledged ship of war.

On boarding her I was taken down below, where my filthy garments were removed, my long hair cropped, a rough but thorough scrubbing administered, and the complete outfit of a common sailor furnished me. Then I was led back to the deck and amidships, where an officer gave me a rating and assigned my mess; then I was sent forward.

The first person I met on the forecastle was Sam Green.

"I'm glad to see ye, Ben," he said in a low tone, "even if ye be a member of a British fleet," and he looked at me quizzically.

"Of a British fleet?" I queried, glancing around me.

"Yes," he replied. "See yonder craft? Ye ought to know her," and he pointed towards a



vessel anchored two cable-lengths away on our right.

“It is the Canseau ! ” I exclaimed the next instant.

“Yes,” he assented, “an’ she’s our flag-ship, has now twenty guns an’ a crew of a hundred an’ fifty, Captain Mowatt, commander ; that’s one. Then thar’s the Cat, eighteen guns an’ a hundred an’ twenty men ; she’s number two,” and he motioned off towards the left.

I looked in that direction with more than ordinary interest, for I thought immediately of Master Goodyear, who must be already on board of her ; and there she was a hundred fathoms away, her deck, like our own, thronging with sailors.

“We are number three, fifteen guns an’ a hundred men,” Sam went on ; “an’ back yonder are the Roger and the Spry,” and he directed my attention towards a schooner and a sloop farther up the harbor ; “one has ten guns an’ eighty men, while t’other has seven guns an’ fifty men. That’s the fleet, an’ we are only waitin’ for the signal to sail.”

Before I could ask him our destination, a flag was run up the mast of the Canseau, and instantly on the five vessels Master Green had



pointed out all was life and motion. Anchors were hoisted, sails were unfurled, and soon, with the Canseau in the lead, the fleet was standing down the bay.

When we were well under way I received a summons to the cabin, and in a few minutes was face to face with Captain Coulson. He was exceedingly good-natured, and, judging from previous experiences, I at once decided that he had some special purpose in this interview.

"Well, Ben," he began with a grin, "here you are, back where you started from."

"Yes, sir," I admitted.

"How did you like your quarters in the Bridewell?" he next questioned.

"I have seen better," I replied shortly.

"But it was better than hanging," he suggested meaningly.

"I never tried that," I retorted.

"But you came mighty near it," he answered, as though he relished the thought, "and the fact is the death sentence still hangs over you. It is only suspended at my request," and he stopped to note the effect of his words.

I thought it was just as likely that he was lying as telling the truth, and so showed no apprehension at his statement.



“Yes,” he continued with emphasis, “it is as I tell you. I got General Howe to postpone the execution, and send you on board for this trip. I presume you know where we are going.”

Instantly it came to me that we were bound for Falmouth to carry out the Tory's revenge, so I replied :

“I can make a good guess ;” and as I said it there arose before me a picture of the five vessels of the fleet gathered in Falmouth harbor with their seventy cannon and five hundred men, and I knew the town was doomed.

As though he divined my thoughts the Captain laughed aloud.

“The man or men who dare to thwart Samuel Coulson's purposes must pay the penalty,” he avowed, and now his tones grew fierce, and his eyes flashed with anger. “Falmouth will soon be laid in ashes, and I intend that you, Ben, shall help the work on. That is why I have you here ; that is my part of the vengeance on you. With your own hands you shall be made to fire the cannon, to which you have been assigned, into the village. After that you are to be taken on shore, and forced to apply the torch to any buildings that may escape the bombarding. I shall try to spare Enoch Freeman's and Jedediah



Preble's houses so that you shall kindle the fire that consumes them ; and I hope the two rebels will themselves perish in the flames."

The intense hate he displayed as he hissed forth these words caused me to shudder, and, doubtless, taking my act as an evidence of fear he went on :

"I say you shall do this, for, mark you ! if you don't, back to Boston you shall go, and be hanged as a spy. I have but to report your refusal to obey me at headquarters, and the death sentence now held in abeyance will be carried out."

"And what will happen if I do obey you ?" I asked. "It would be like you to report me as disobedient, and have me hanged anyway."

"No," he responded grimly ; "there is something that is worth more to me than your death : it is the power to torment you. Should you obey me at Falmouth, I shall spare you until I know you have done more injury to the rebels than you have to the King ; then I shall rid myself of you. You can take your choice between the two fates. In either case you will wish you had never seen Samuel Coulson," and he glowered at me until my blood ran cold in my veins.

I now knew I had a fiend to deal with. I could expect no mercy from him. His delight



would be to make my life miserable as long as I could be of use to him ; then he would trample me under his feet as though I were only a worm.

In our most desperate straits we are sometimes unexpectedly buoyed up. It was so with me now. I grew strong as he glared at me. My fears vanished, and in their place came a resolve to defy and baffle the Tory. I would still find a way to thwart his purposes, and gain the victory over him.

I ceased to tremble, and noticing it, he cried :

“ You think to escape me again, but you won’t. Every officer is specially charged to keep an eye on you ; and for every attempt to run away you will have a worse flogging than I gave you that day you rang the bell in Falmouth,” and he smiled as though the recollection was pleasing to him.

I made no answer, and after a moment he added :

“ You can go now.”

I left the cabin and went back to the fore-castle, where Sam Green met me.

“ The ole man was hard on ye,” he remarked, studying my face keenly.

“ Yes,” I assented.



He looked about him, and finding no one near enough to hear his words, he continued :

“I’m here, lad, to help ye. Keep yere eye open, an’ be ready,” then he walked away.

It was something to feel that I had one friend on the craft, and greatly cheered by that fact I gave zealous attention to my duties. The training I was now receiving might be of service in our own navy as soon as it was formed. So I pulled at the ropes, drilled at the guns, and practiced at arms, with a zest which led Lieutenant Gay to say to me one day when I had particularly pleased him :

“It’s a pity you are a confounded rebel,” a remark which caused my shipmates to stare incredulously at him.

Our course was farther out to sea than that usually followed by vessels bound for Falmouth, and, as I expected, carried us far to the east of that harbor. In fact the first land we sighted was Damiscove Island, east of the Kennebec. Here we anchored, and on the following day a boat from each vessel was sent on shore to pillage the farms of the defenseless settlers. My blood boiled with indignation as sheep and hogs and cattle were sent off to the fleet. So rich was the plunder that two additional days were spent here, and it



was not until the afternoon of the fifteenth sail was made back along the coast. Early the next morning we were at the entrance of Casco Bay, where the rest of the day was spent in devastating the surrounding islands.

Fortunately neither at Damiscove Island nor here was I forced to participate in the raiding, whether from fear on the part of Captain Coulson that I might escape him if I went on shore, I cannot say. Just before sundown, however, a signal went up from the Canseau for the Captain to come on board, and he directed Sam Green, who was the boatswain of his gig, to take me along as one of the rowers, probably that I might be where he could keep his own eye upon me.

We pulled over to the flag-ship, which was lying closer in under the south end of Peak's Island than any of her consorts, and our skipper, boarding her, went into the cabin.

"Go on board yerselves, lads," Sam said to his men as soon as Captain Coulson had disappeared ; "Ben and me'll look out for the boat."

Glad to visit with the crew of the cutter, our comrades speedily clambered over the rail on to the deck.

"Here ye be," Master Green now ejaculated in a voice meant only for my ear. "Do ye see? all



the boats of this here craft are ashore! Now's our chance. We'll just pull like a streak 'round the pint of the island, which'll hide us from the fleet; then we'll strike straight 'cross to the mainland. We'll be half way thar 'fore they can git a boat arter us, an' 'twill be too late then to ketch us."

Risky as the undertaking was we were not likely to have a better chance of escape, and, cutting the painter, we were in another moment rowing as we had never rowed before in our lives for the south end of the islet.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### IN WHICH CAPTAIN MOWATT SHOWS HIS HAND.

THE boldness of our venture contributed to its success. That we should attempt to desert in broad daylight, and with the eyes of half a hundred men fastened upon us, was apparently too preposterous an idea to find lodgment at first in the minds of the watchers ; and what they thought of our unexpected movement may be surmised from their shouts.

“The pigs will all be catched, laddies, ’fore ye get thar !”

“Bet ye a shillin’ ye won’t find a lamb !”

“Come back here, ye spalpeens, ’fore the ole man misses ye !”

“Hold on, lads, an’ we’ll go wid ye !”

“Did ye ever see such a lark, shipmates ? They are goin’ to bring back the island.”

These, and a dozen more similar exclamations, swept across the water towards us, as we rounded the end of the islet, and disappeared from the sight of the hilarious crew.



“Your plan has worked like a charm, Sam,” I now cried joyfully. “It isn’t half as far over to the mainland as I thought, and I believe we shall reach it before they suspect we are running away.”

“I dunno,” my comrade answered, without lessening his stroke; “the minnit the ole man ketches on to our trick, thar’ll be music. He’ll make things hum till they get arter us.” And things must have hummed under the Captain’s direction, for we were not over half way to the shore, when two yawls, each pulled by six sailors, came into view below the island. Catching sight of us, they gave an exultant yell, and redoubled their efforts to overhaul us.

As their cry reached my ears I became excited, and paddled wildly in my attempt to increase our speed.

“Tut! Tut! Ben,” Master Green cautioned me; “ye’ll gain nuthin’ in that way. Take her cool like! All we want is to hold our own. See! they are only pullin’ thirty-four strokes to our forty. We can let up a bit, an’ still keep ahead of ’em.”

I immediately recognized the wisdom of his suggestion, and lessened the dippings of my own blades to keep time with him. When they



spurted we spurted, when they slackened we slackened, and so we kept up a speed which enabled us to land before they were much more than half across the strait.

Without stopping to secure our craft we ran for the nearest woods, and were safely under the cover of the trees before our pursuers reached the shore.

I was for plunging deep into the forest, but Sam stopped me.

“Hold up,” he said; “mebbe they won’t foller us. We’ll go ’long the edge to the south, ’cause it’s what they won’t expect; then we’ll hide an’ watch.”

He led the way as he spoke down the woods a hundred yards or so, where we crouched in a thicket from which we had a good view of the bay.

The redcoats were just landing, and their first act was to send two of their number to secure the abandoned yawl which was drifting off with the tide. While this was being done the officers in charge of the barges came together for consultation.

“There’s no use in following the rascals,” one of them declared; “they’ve had time enough to get a half mile away. We don’t know either



how near here they may find friends to help them. It's a risky business chasing them up."

"What is it to us anyway?" retorted the other, coolly lighting his pipe. "Captain Coulson can keep a better watch over his men, or look them up himself. I'm with you for ending the pursuit here."

The conversation was interrupted at this point by an act on the part of one of the sailors who had been sent after the drifting boat. Leaving his comrade to return with the secured craft, he sauntered slowly up towards the forest.

"Thar they be!" he now exclaimed. "Don't ye see 'em?" and he broke into a run for the place where we had entered the woods.

"Come back here, you fool!" shouted his commander. "You don't see them any more than I do! Come back, I say!"

If the fellow heard he did not heed the command.

"I'll ketch 'em!" he cried. "I'll ketch 'em!" and then he ran faster than ever for the pines.

"I'll be blest if 'tain't Zeke Goodyear!" exclaimed my comrade in a whisper.

Springing to our feet we watched the runner with new interest, while I explained in a low voice how the patriot came to be on the Cat.



“ I’m feered he’ll bring the whole pack down on us,” Sam ejaculated as I finished. “ We must cut for it.”

The last declaration was called forth by a sudden movement on the part of the Britishers. Evidently the midshipman in charge of the boat to which Master Goodyear belonged had become convinced that the latter was also running away, and regarding it as a more serious thing to lose one of his own crew than to fail to catch two deserters from the King George, he now said to his men :

“ After him, lads ! A crown to the man who first puts hands upon him ! ” and with shouts the whole squad started for the woods.

Long before they reached the place where Ezekiel Goodyear had disappeared, however, we were rods away from our thicket, still moving to the south and west, as the direction most likely to be neglected by the searching party. The forest grew denser as we advanced, the ground declined, and soon we came to an extensive swamp.

“ We can’t go any farther in this direction, Sam,” I exclaimed, and waiting for my companion, who was a rod or two behind me, to come up.

“ I reck’n not,” he replied as he joined me.



“Waal, thar’s no need to. We hain’t followed. The redcoats went off t’ other way.”

“I hope they won’t catch Master Goodyear,” I remarked, growing anxious about him, now that our own escape seemed assured.

“His chance wa’n’t as good as ours,” commented Sam, “but ’twas wuth takin’, an’ most likely he’ll git clear.”

“That makes me think, Sam,” I said. “You told me you were on board the King George to help me. Did you mean that was why you enlisted?”

“Sartin,” he declared. “I hung ’round her cabin ’nough to larn that the ole man was goin’ to put her into the navy, an’ have ye jine, so I ’listed to git ye free; and I dun it;” he added with some pride.

“Yes, you did,” I responded gratefully, “and I thank you for it.”

“Hist!” he said, an instant later. “Sum un is comin’ this way. We’d better hide in yonder tree.”

He pointed towards a huge hemlock, and in another minute we were snugly concealed in its thick top.

I had myself heard no suspicious sounds, and so, the moment I was hidden, strained my ears



to detect the noise which had alarmed my comrade.

Soon I caught the snapping of a twig as though it had been stepped upon ; this was followed by the faint rustle of a leaf ; whoever the approaching man was he was apparently coming slowly and cautiously.

“Mos’ likely ’tis Zeke,” Sam muttered ; “no redcoat would come that way.”

Expectantly, therefore, we waited the appearance of the fellow, and were soon rewarded by catching a glimpse of him through the branches of our tree. It was Master Goodyear, fast enough, and, descending to the lower limbs of the hemlock, Sam attracted his attention by a low hiss. In another moment he was beside us in the thick mass of evergreen, and greeting us with the warmth of an old friend.

“Bless me, if ’tain’t ye, Ben ! an’ if I’m alive, ’tis Sam Green, whom I hain’t seen for nigh two years ! So ye are the desarters we were arter ? Wall, spin yer yarn, an’ I’ll tell mine, though ’tisn’t very long.”

I briefly related what had happened to me since I left the Bridewell ; then he said :

“Ye an’ Sam took a cute time to ’scape, an’ no mistake. Thar wa’n’t no boat on the Canseau,



an' the ole man had to sign'l the other vessels to send sum over. We were the fust to git away, though the *Roger's* yawl follered close. 'Fore we reached the flag-ship her capt'n shouted out what the matter was, an' we put on arter ye 'round the island. The rest ye know 'till I ran for the woods. I've been here many a time ; was brought up over back here a few miles ; an' takin' my best chance, I scud to the sou'-sou'-west as softly as I could. Findin' they were arter me I hid in a clump of bushes till the squad went off on the northard tack ; then I cum on, fetchin' up in this here port, which I muss say is a snug one."

For at least an hour longer we sat there, but heard and saw nothing of our pursuers. It had now become too dark to see a rod away in the thick woods, and the chilly night breeze drew through the treetop, cutting us to the bone.

"I say, lads, the redcoats muss have giv up the sarch 'fore now, an' I move we git out of this," Master Goodyear exclaimed suddenly.

"Where shall we go?" I asked.

"Thar's a farmhouse at t'other end of the swamp, whar my brother-in-law lives, an' I can guide ye thar like a book," he responded.

"Lead away," Sam and I answered, following him down to the ground.



Once at the foot of the tree he started boldly off through the forest towards the north, and confident that he knew the way Master Green and I made no attempt to shape our course. It would doubtless have been better if we had, for in ten minutes we were brought into a slough where we were soon floundering nearly up to our knees. Every effort to extricate ourselves failed, owing to the darkness, and at length we set ourselves with a dogged persistency to keep straight ahead whatever the footing.

How long we kept up the tramp will always remain an uncertainty. Not until the night was well advanced and our feet heavy with the accumulations of mud, our garments torn with the twigs and briers, and our strength quite exhausted from our efforts, did we emerge upon high land again.

"I shan't go a step farther to-night," Sam declared, when he found we were on solid ground again. "I'm goin' to camp right here."

He took out his pocket flint and steel, and scraping together some leaves started a fire. Ezekiel and I hastened to collect some of the dried limbs that lay all about us, and soon we had a huge blaze. As its rays lighted up the surrounding trees Master Goodyear cried :



“Sho’ now ! if this hain’t Wintergreen Island, an’ I believe we’ve been a trampin’ round it half the night, for ’tain’t over a half mile from where we started.”

There was little comfort in his words, and so Sam and I said nothing. When we had rested a while, we broke down a lot of pine boughs, and, constructing a rude bower on the windward side of our fire, crawled into it, and got what sleep we could.

Early in the morning, however, we were astir, and with the daylight to help him Ezekiel led us quickly off of the islet, and out of the swamp, to the dwelling of Uriah Nason, where we were given a hearty welcome.

Dry clothing and a hearty meal were speedily furnished us, and then Master Green and I, leaving our comrade at his sister’s, hastened off towards Falmouth to acquaint the authorities with the coming of the British fleet.

Before we reached the town the path we were following brought us out upon an elevated place where we had a good view of the bay. A single glance seaward showed me that the five vessels had already hoisted their anchors, and were tack-ling up the harbor.

“We must hurry, Sam,” I said, “or the fleet will arrive at the village before us.”



"No," he replied, watching the movements of the craft; "the wind's dead 'gainst them, an' 'twill be 'most night 'fore they're off the town."

But I was not convinced, and continued my journey at a pace which made the old sailor puff and blow to keep up with me. It was not far from the middle of the forenoon, therefore, when we presented ourselves before General Preble's door.

"He is over at Greele's tavern, attending a meeting of the Safety Committee," we were told, and so we posted off to that inn.

I had but to give my name, and my comrade and I were at once admitted into the room where the town leaders were assembled.

There were many exclamations of greeting, and questions about my coming, but unheeding them all I announced :

"Captain Mowatt, with a fleet of five vessels, carrying seventy guns and five hundred men, is in the lower bay, on his way here to destroy the town."

The members of the Committee glanced uneasily at each other, and then General Preble asked :

"Are you sure of this, Ben? We discovered the vessels yesterday, but thought it was some



Britisher who merely intended to ravage the islands of the bay and have sent Captains Noyes and Knight with their companies to drive him off."

"When did you send them?" I inquired.

"Last night, and they must have crossed over to the isles early this morning."

"To find them already devastated," I exclaimed, "and the fleet on its way here," and I then told enough of my story for them to know it was no idle report I was giving them.

"Sam says it will be nearly night before the ships can beat up here," I added, "and you will have that time to arrange for defense."

"It will do little good," responded Colonel Freeman, a little bitterly, I thought; "we haven't powder enough to load the few cannon we have for a single round."

Amazed that the town was in so helpless a condition, I ventured to ask:

"Did not you receive notice of Captain Coulson's threat some weeks ago? I know arrangements were made to send you word before I was cast into the Bridewell."

There was a marked silence for a few minutes, and then Master Theophilus Parsons said:

"Yes, Philip Crandall of Harpswell brought



us the news early in September, and I was one among a score who regarded the tidings as the ravings of an angry and baffled man, that were not worth the heeding."

"Perhaps the British commander may be persuaded to give up his purpose," Doctor Coffin suggested, and straightway the assembly fell to discussing how best to mollify the Tory's anger, and conciliate his powerful ally, Captain Mowatt.

Master Green and I at length grew weary of what seemed to us a useless debate, and begged leave to withdraw. Permission was granted, after we had been thanked for our service, and we went up to my old home on King Street, where Jane gave us a cordial welcome, and Mistress Coulson, who was too ill to see us, sent us out words of kindly greeting.

At four o'clock Enoch Freeman came running into the house to tell us that the fleet had arrived, and was anchored in a semi-circle off the village. We hurried down town, and were in time to see an officer come on shore from the Canseau, under a flag of truce, bringing a letter for the Safety Committee.

Later the missive fell into the hands of Colonel Freeman, and it has been my privilege to read it several times. It was long, illiterate, and abusive,



and had evidently been prepared the day before, while the Canseau was in the lower bay—at the time, as I have reason to believe, when Captain Coulson was called over to the flagship, and I made my escape ; for it was easy to see that the Tory had had a part in its composition. I give only the substance of it here : \*

*Canseau, Falmouth, Oct. 16, 1775.*

SIRS :

You have long experienced Britain's forbearance in withholding the rod of correction. You have been guilty of the most unpardonable rebellion. I am ordered to execute a just punishment on the town of Falmouth. I give you two hours in which you can remove your sick and helpless ones. I shall then open fire and lay the town in ashes.

I am, etc.,

H. MOWATT,

*Commander.*

The Town Committee had adjourned some hours before without coming to any decision as to the best way of dealing with the enemy, but they were now called together again, and appointed General Preble, Doctor Coffin, and Master John

\* I have examined a copy of the original missive, and find that Master Mathews has given here the main points in it.—*Editor.*



Pagan as their representatives to visit the Canseau and obtain what concession they could from her irate captain.

They found him insolent and implacable. To their suggestion that two hours were not long enough to remove the sick and helpless from the village, he replied :

“My orders I have received from Admiral Graves, and they direct me to repair to this place with all possible expedition, take my position near the town, and burn, sink, and destroy, and this without giving the people the slightest warning. The note you have received is of special grace, and at the risk of my commission.”

“But surely you will be willing to delay the execution of those orders until we can send a special messenger to the Admiral, asking on what terms he will spare our town,” General Preble expostulated.

The Britisher turned and consulted in a low tone with Captain Coulson, who stood a few feet away, evidently enjoying the discomfiture of his townsmen ; and then, with a triumphant gleam in his eyes, he replied :

“Deliver me all your cannon and small-arms and ammunition by eight to-morrow morning, and you are safe until I hear further from the



Admiral, who may be induced to save your town ; or deliver me eight stands of small-arms immediately, and you will not be molested till that hour."

The delegates were keen enough to see that proposal was merely a scheme on the part of the Tory and his willing ally to render the village absolutely defenseless before it was bombarded,\* and, therefore, they answered :

"We do not believe our people will submit to these humiliating terms, but you shall have their reply as soon as it can be sent on board ;" then they hastened on shore.

Their colleagues were still at Greele's tavern, and, on learning of the disgraceful proposal of Captain Mowatt, were practically of one opinion : It was under no consideration to be accepted.

In order to gain time to ascertain the wishes of their townsmen, however, they sent the eight muskets off to the flag-ship ; after which they issued a call for a town meeting at seven o'clock the next morning.

When these arrangements were completed it was night ; and a darkness, as heavy and somber as a funeral pall, settled down over the ill-fated town.

\* There is no other reasonable explanation of this proposition on the part of Captain Mowatt.—*Editor*.



## CHAPTER XV.

### IN WHICH THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN FOR FALMOUTH'S DOOM.

I DO not think it was over an hour after the final adjournment of the Safety Committee before the prevailing sentiment of the townspeople respecting the demand of Captain Mowatt was well known. In the houses, on the streets, at the taverns, men with pale but resolute faces discussed the situation, and declared that they would not submit to the Britisher's infamous proposal, not even to save their homes and property. It was clear that at the meeting on the morrow there would be an overwhelming vote not to give up the arms and ammunition of the patriots.

As this refusal would mean the immediate destruction of the village, scores took advantage of the few hours of respite granted them, and hastened to remove their families and household goods to a place of safety. All night long teams were making for the country. The aged, the sick, and the helpless were first cared for ; then the more valuable personal effects of the settlers



were carried away. Vehicles of every description, from the hand-barrow to the ox-cart, were made use of. The cries of the children, the sobs of the women, the moans of the suffering, mingled with the sighs of the chilly night winds. There was hurry and bustle everywhere, but no panic.

The heavy darkness hid many a kind and unselfish deed. Men left their own to look out for themselves while they assisted some helpless neighbor ; women trudged out of town that others weaker than themselves might occupy their places in the overcrowded carts ; bundles, sometimes containing all that the bearer possessed of this world's goods, were tossed ruthlessly aside at the appeal of the aged, or the cry of the child. In a hundred ways humanity honored itself that night ; and there were heroes of all ages and sizes.

Sam and I were still down town when this evacuation began and, following an example set for us by Colonel Freeman and some of the other members of the Committee, we devoted several hours to the helping of those families, whose heads were away in the Continental army,\* to

\* I find that there were on this night forty families in the town the heads of which were with the forces about Boston. It is to these the aid Master Mathews refers to was given.—*Editor.*



prepare for flight. About midnight, however, we found ourselves back in front of Greele's inn, and as Master Green filled and lit his pipe I asked :

“What next, Sam ?”

“Thar's a duty we've neglected too long already,” he replied between his whiffs.

“What is it ?” I inquired in some surprise.

“We must take the mistress to a place of safety,” he responded.

I wondered that I had not thought of it before, and started at a brisk walk up the street towards the house. Sam kept pace with me, and together we entered the kitchen.

A lighted candle stood on the table, but Jane was upstairs. Calling her down, we told her of our purpose, to meet with the remonstrance :

“But Mistress Coulson is too feeble to be moved. I don't believe she is going to live until morning ;” and I now noticed that her eyes were red with weeping.

“It cannot be worse than for her to stay here,” I replied. “The booming of the cannon and the crackling of the flames will frighten her. Then there is little hope of this house escaping in the general conflagration, and she will have to be carried out from it a few hours later. I think she will see herself that it is wiser to go now.”



“I'll speak to her about it,” the faithful woman said, going back to the sick chamber.

A moment later I was called upstairs, where Mistress Coulson greeted me with a smile, and then asked feebly :

“You are certain, Ben, the town will be destroyed?”

“I have no doubt of it, good mistress,” I replied gently; “it is only a question of a few hours.”

“And it is all that the man I call husband may wreak his vengeance on a people whose sole crime is their love of liberty,” she cried excitedly.

“Mothers and babes, the sick and the dying, are to be driven out into the bleak fields shelterless; there, with tears of agony, to see their homes, their furniture, their clothing, their provisions, all consumed by the cruel flames. A more barbarous act was never committed by a band of savages; and it is fitting that I, the wife of the instigator, should go forth with the others. Yes, make your arrangements, and I will begin the journey, though I trust a merciful Father will spare me from witnessing the destruction Samuel Coulson and his allies shall cause.”

“Where shall we carry you?” I queried.

“To my cousin's, the wife of Nathaniel Milton



of Deering," she answered. "Jane knows where it is, and can direct you; nor will my coming be unexpected, for I long ago arranged with my relative to come there should I have to flee from the town."

She sank back quite exhausted by her speaking, and leaving Jane to care for her, I hastened away to find a conveyance of some kind in which to take her out to Master Milton's.

I knew that Miss Dora had disposed of the Captain's horses and vehicles before she left for Boston, and that we must, therefore, depend upon others to furnish us with the outfit we now needed. So leaving Sam in the kitchen, peacefully smoking, I went out in search of a horse and wagon.

For a half hour I sought among our neighbors to find some one who could lend me a turnout of some kind, but failed. Every team was already in use.

"I shall have to get a light carriage, and have Sam and myself draw it," I muttered, pausing for a moment at the corner where the street I was on came into Monument Square.

The next moment I saw that there was a light still burning in the waiting-room of Marston's tavern, and continued my soliloquy:

"Some one is up over at the inn. I'll go over



there, and maybe I can secure a wagon of some sort, if not a beast."

As I approached the building I observed a dark figure on the stoop, and a little spark of fire where the head of the man ought to be suggested that it was somebody enjoying a late, or possibly it were better to say an early, smoke, as it was now near one o'clock. The eighteenth day of October, destined to be so eventful in the history of Falmouth, had already begun.

Walking up to the steps I accosted the unknown personage, saying :

"Good-evening, sir."

"Hello, Ben," the well-known voice of Jack Mandeville replied.

Delighted to know he was my old friend, the driver of the Brunswick stage, I asked quickly :

"Where are your horses, Jack?"

"In the barn," he answered, a little gruffly, "Where I propose to keep 'em." Then, as though this declaration needed some explanation, he went on :

"I turned in at nine. In an hour some one was after me to let him have the animals, and I was called up every half hour from that time on till I got up and sat down here. Since then fourteen fellows by actual count have wanted the



beasts ; some even offered to buy them. But what could I do ? The horses were tired out with their hard pull over here, and before I'd gone to bed every seat on and in the coach was booked for the return trip in the morning. If I let the steeds go I couldn't make my journey, and so I've served all alike. I've said 'no' till I'm not sure I'll ever be able to say anything else."

"You are doing very well saying something else now, Jack," I retorted with a laugh, "and what's more, I'm going to give you a chance to say 'yes.' I want those horses, at least one of them."

"What ye want him for ?" he inquired testily.

I told him, concluding :

"It isn't far out to Master Milton's, Jack, and you are not going back on me. I'll be careful of the animal and bring him back before you need him."

He shifted uneasily in his chair for a moment or two, and then blurted out :

"Look here, Ben ! you shall have the horses and the stage, too. I might as well drive out to Deering as be sitting here. You run back to the house, and tell that gal to let you have both a straw and feather bed. By the time you get them down to the side door, I'll be there with the



coach. We'll turn down the seats, and make as comfortable quarters for the mistress as her own bedroom. Then Sam and you can wrap her in blankets and bring her down. I'll drive easy like, and she'll make the trip as pert as can be. I wouldn't do this for every one, but she's a townswoman. I knew her when she was a little gal, playing 'round her pa's door-yard ; and now she's sick nigh unto death. Too bad ! Too bad !" and the rough but kind-hearted fellow arose and, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, went off towards the barn.

I almost flew up the street, and had beds and bolsters and blankets down at the door when Master Mandeville drove up. It took us but a few minutes to arrange the stage for its occupant, and then Sam and I brought the invalid down, and laid her gently upon the improvised couch. Jane got in to care for her mistress, while Master Green and I mounted the box beside Jack and we were off.

Never had a woman a more cautious driver than Master Mandeville proved that night, and, saving the jars and jolts which came from the conditions of the road, and which were unavoidable, we reached our destination without incident. It was still too early, even for a thrifty farmer, to



be astir, and leaping down from the coach I went over to the door and knocked. Soon Master Milton himself answered the rap, and I explained to him who we were, and the object of our coming.

Instantly there was a bustle in the house ; lights were lit ; feet hurried to and fro ; the door opened, and the kind face of Mistress Milton beamed out upon us.

“Bring Mary right in,” she said ; “her room is all ready.”

Leaving Jack to look after his horses, Sam and I bore Mistress Coulson into the house, and laid her upon the bed pointed out to us. She smiled as we did so, remarking in quite a strong voice :

“I wouldn’t have believed I could have made the journey so easily, my good lads ; it is due to your excellent arrangement, and God bless you for it. But don’t let me keep you a minute. Hasten back to the town, where you may be in time to aid others, and if I never see you again, these are my last words : Be true to the cause.”

A great lump rose up in my throat, and I couldn’t say a word. I looked appealingly over at Sam, but he was worse off than I was, and so, without making any reply, we went back to the stage where we expected to find Master Mandeville impatiently waiting for us.



Instead he was unhitching his horses, and explained his act by telling us :

“ Master Milton says I may as well feed up here as in the village ; then when I drive back I shall be all ready for my route.”

“ Yes,” chimed in our host himself, appearing at that moment with a lantern, “ and Ma has called Betsey, that’s our girl, who will have breakfast ready for you in a jiffy. This is a good place to feed both man and beast.”

Whatever the animals may have thought of the fodder placed before them, there could be but one opinion about the meal we sat down to a half hour later. There was hot brown bread, baked potatoes, pork and beans, roast mutton, and pumpkin pies as yellow as gold, and which melted in your mouth ; and if three fellows ever showed that they were hungry we were they. We ate until we could eat no more, and were just getting up from the table when Mistress Milton appeared, asking in something of a flutter :

“ Which ones of you are Sam and Ben ? ”

We told her.

“ The Mistress is sinking fast,” she announced, “ and wishes to see you once more.”

Hurriedly we followed her to the chamber where Mistress Coulson lay. She was propped up in



bed, and even to Master Green and me it was clear that she was dying.

“God is merciful,” she gasped as she saw us. “He has heard my prayer. I shall not see nor shall I hear them tell of the destruction of the town. But have no fear ; our loved cause shall yet triumph. The mouth of the Lord has spoken it ; whereof I am glad.”

Her eyes closed ; her lips ceased to move ; and without a struggle the end came. So quietly did she pass away, Sam and I could scarce believe it when Jane exclaimed :

“She’s gone !” and broke into tears.

I am not ashamed to add that my own and my comrade’s eyes were wet as we left the room and went back to the kitchen. The woman whom we had both counted it an honor to serve was no more, and our hearts were desolate.

Jack caught something of our sorrow, and at sunrise we drove in silence back to the village. We were in time for the town meeting, and went with the throng which, about seven o’clock, gathered in the Court-house. Colonel Freeman was elected moderator, and when he had called the audience to order, Master Preble, as Chairman of the Committee that had visited the Canseau the evening before, made his report. When



he told of the reply of the Committee to the demand of the British commander, the crowd cheered; and when he finished, some one called out:

"I move the same committee be sent off to tell the redcoat we won't surrender our arms."

The motion was seconded and carried unanimously without discussion,\* and the chairman, bowing to General Preble, said:

"We will wait here for the return of that committee."

As the three patriots left the room, some of us, and Sam and I were among the number, followed them down to the dock, where we watched their boat go over to the flag-ship. It did not remain there over five minutes, and when it started back the oarsmen pulled as though they did not have a minute to spare.

The General and his colleagues showed the same haste when they landed, and gave us a hard race back to the Court building. Pushing his way through the throng, Master Preble reached the platform, and announced:

\* "No more fearless and patriotic action by a deliberate body of people in such an exposed and helpless condition was taken during the struggle of the colonies"—From PORTLAND IN THE PAST.



“ In thirty minutes Captain Mowatt will begin the bombardment of the town.”

“ There is, then, fellow-citizens, but one course of action open to us,” Colonel Freeman declared solemnly. “ Each one of us must protect his property and his life as best he can ; and may the good Lord help us ! ”

Instantly the patriots scattered ; some to remain by their homes as long as there was a chance of saving them ; others to flee from the village before the rain of balls and bombs began.

Sam and I, having no property to protect, went slowly up Meeting house Lane to the First Parish Building, where we stood looking off at the fleet.

Never was there a fairer autumnal day. The sky was cloudless ; the wind gentle ; the atmosphere invigorating. The whole expanse of town, and bay, and islands seemed to repose under the smile of a loving God. But there were fiends at hand to mar the lovely picture, no less fiends because they wore the guise of men.

The half hour passed ; then a red flag ran up to the masthead of the Canseau ; an instant later a cannon boomed forth. It was the signal for Falmouth's doom.



## CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH I MEET CAPTAIN COULSON FACE TO FACE.

My account of the further occurrences of the day must necessarily be a partial one. He who is himself a part of a scene observes only that which transpires about him. I can speak, therefore, only of what I saw and heard and did.

Before the sound of that signal-gun had died away the whole fleet cleared for action, and soon a shower of cannon-balls, carcasses, bombs, live shells, grape-shot, and even bullets from small-arms, was raining down upon the compact part of the town. The spectacle would have been a fascinating one, but for the wanton destruction the missiles immediately wrought.

They crashed through the warehouses, they plowed up the streets, they cut off the limbs of the trees, they sank the shipping, they set fire to the dwellings. They screamed and hissed, they whirled and danced, they shrieked and sung, like so many demons rejoicing over the havoc they were making. Nor was the pandemonium a brief



one ; for nearly nine hours it continued, until upwards of three thousand projectiles had been hurled into the village, an average of one for every ten seconds.

The first building to take fire was Josiah Shaw's saddle and harness shop on Middle Street ; and as the flames shot up from its roof I turned to my comrade, exclaiming :

“I'm going back down town, Sam. It's better than standing idly here. Perhaps we can help some one to save his property.”

“And git killed yerself,” growled the old sailor, but he followed me down the lane.

We had gone but a few rods when we met two men, one of whom I had seen before and knew to be Major Libby, though I had never spoken with him. He seemed to recognize me, however, for, bowing his head slightly, he remarked :

“I see the meeting-house is still uninjured, Master Mathews.”

“Yes, sir,” I replied ; “no balls have as yet been thrown so far up town.”

“Nevertheless, Master Bragdon and I will station ourselves there to save the building should it catch fire,” he explained ; and then I knew that his companion was Solomon Bragdon, the rope maker.



"I don't know as we shall save anything very long," I responded with a dubious shake of my head, for Captain Coulson's announcement about landing a force to fire the buildings which escaped the cannon shot had come to my mind. "After a time a squad of redcoats will be sent on shore to burn everything which the guns do not destroy."

"Do you think so?" he asked, stopping short, and glancing off towards the vessels, as though he expected to see the band of incendiaries already on their way towards the docks.

"I know it," was my answer. "It is a part of their plan, and will be carried out unless we can get together a force large enough to prevent the landing."

"It cannot be done," he answered with the conviction of one who knew whereof he spoke. "Some of us have already discussed such a movement, but with both companies of our militia away at the islands, we have neither the men nor the arms and ammunition to repel a landing. No, Colonel Freeman was right when he said at our meeting this morning: 'Each of us must protect his property and life as best he can; and may the good Lord help us.' He it is who may help us to save His house."



Master Green did not stop to hear this conversation, and was already some distance down the street, so without further word I hurried on after him. But as I ran along I experienced the most profound sense of helplessness I had ever known in my life. What could I, or any one else, do to stay the destruction of life and property in Falmouth? Whatever, or whoever, was spared that day would owe it to the hand of a merciful God. Young as I was, and careless as I had hitherto been about religious things, I now felt sure of this, and with the brief prayer, low but fervent, "Lord help us," I joined my comrade, and in another moment we were in the heart of the burning district.

This, at that time, centered in and about Middle and Church streets. A dozen houses and stores, St. Paul's Church, the new Court-house, and the new fire-engine building beside it, were already burning fiercely; and that part of the town soon presented the appearance of a roaring, volcanic sheet of flame.

It was useless to attempt to save anything there, and we turned into a side street which led us around by Greele's tavern. The little hostelry was still untouched, but as we drew near it, a red hot shot struck in a pile of chips at the rear of



the building, setting them on fire. Rapidly the flames spread towards the inn, and, anxious to save it, Sam and I ran into the yard.

Quick as we were, however, Mistress Greele was before us. Hastening out of the back door with a huge pan in her hand, she first trampled out the blaze, and then, rolling the cannon ball into her tin, carried it to the side lane, over into which she threw it. Turning about to return to the house, she saw us, and exclaimed :

“The redcoats will have to stop firing soon.”

“What makes you think so?” I asked.

“Because their bombs have given out,” she answered with a comical shrug of her fat shoulders, “and they are now making new balls. Don’t you see they can’t wait for them to cool?”

“What a woman!” cried Master Green admiringly, as she disappeared in the dwelling. “I’ll bet my fust month’s pay arter I ship agin that she’ll save her tavern ;” and she did.

Though the inn was struck by several balls, and set on fire three times during the day, its undaunted mistress remained there throughout the bombardment, extinguishing the flames with her own hands, and keeping her property from serious injury, though every building about her was destroyed.



A little beyond the inn we fell in with a squad of men, under the lead of Joseph McLellan, one of the Committee of Safety, who were making a systematic attempt to save all the property in the neighborhood of King, Queen, Middle, and York streets, which was still uninjured by the fire. We joined them, and until after the noon hour were busy at our self-assigned task.

Heedless of the rain of shot and shell, we pushed through the clouds of smoke and flying embers, extinguishing flames, pushing in burning buildings, removing goods from houses and stores that were doomed, and stacking them in places which promised the greatest safety. Without intending to boast I here say that Marston's tavern on Monument Square, Greenwood's inn at the corner of Middle and Silver streets, the residences of Master John Cox, Master Benjamin Larrabee, and Master Joshua Freeman, as well as those of our leader and his brother, Brice McLellan, who was also of our party, were saved by our patient and persistent efforts.

During all that toil one thing struck me with such singularity as almost to inspire me with awe. Though the storm of missiles was constant, I did not see a person killed or wounded that morning. Not until one hundred redcoats, early



in the afternoon, landed at the docks, and advanced up the devastated streets, shooting at every person they saw, was any one injured. Then a bullet hit Reuben Clough\* in the thigh, and he fell at my feet. Nearly all of our party had already fled up the nearest lane to get beyond the range of the British marksmen. But Sam Green was still near enough to hear my call, and came back to my assistance. Together we raised our fallen comrade, and carried him off up town.

The route we were following led us by Doctor Coffin's residence, where we stopped to see if the physician was about. Finding the house deserted, we took a cot, out of which we made a comfortable stretcher, and placing Master Clough upon it, hastened on with our burden. Nor did we pause again until we had taken the sufferer, at his own solicitation, to his sister's, out on the Stroudwater road.

We were gone two hours from the village, for we did not leave our unfortunate comrade until Sam, who was quite an expert with injuries, had examined and dressed his wound, which, much to our satisfaction, proved not to be serious.

\* He was the only person injured that day—a singular circumstance under so terrific a fire.—*Editor.*



On entering the town we were attracted by what seemed to be a disturbance near the First Parish meeting-house, and, directing our steps that way, arrived in time to see Major Libby and Master Bragdon marching off with a redcoat\* they had caught in the act of firing the sacred edifice.

"There's a hint for us, Sam," I remarked enthusiastically. "Perhaps we can run in with a stray Britisher, and make a capture, too."

"I'd give more to put these two paws of mine on to the ole man than the whole kit and boodle of t'others," returned the sailor ; but neither one of us imagined that was just what we should do in less than an hour.

From where we stood no extended view could be obtained of the village below, or of the bay, for a dense smoke had settled down between the hill and the shore. The fleet was still firing, however, though not as vigorously as in the earlier part of the day, and their shots were directed towards the north and south parts of the town.

"That shows that the land force is in here,"

\*He was the only Britisher secured during the bombardment, and was delivered a few days later to the Continental Authorities in Cambridge.—*Editor.*



I remarked to my companion, and waving my hand off towards the harbor. "They don't shoot where they think their own men are."

"Then that's whar we muss go to ketch our man," Master Green retorted humorously.

Before I could answer there were shouts on our left, and then the sound of hurrying feet.

"It's a squad of redcoats. Come on!" I cried, leading the way off to the right.

We had not gone a dozen rods before we met a second band of Britishers. They caught sight of us and spread out so as to hem us in on every side but the east. Our only chance of escape was a plunge down the hill, through the thick smoke, into the heart of the burned district, and even this might bring us into the midst of other foes.

But we took it. Dodging behind an old barn which had so far escaped the conflagration, we ran at our best speed across the vacant lot to the next street.

Some of the marines started after us, only to be called back by the officer in charge.

"Let them go, lads!" he said. "Let them go! Some of our comrades will pick them up before they go far in that direction."

But he was mistaken in this. We reached



Turkey Lane, and passed through it to King Street without seeing a single person. The whole section seemed deserted. Here and there a building was standing, however, among them Captain Coulson's dwelling, and the moment my eye fell upon it, I said :

“Let us go down to the old house, Sam ! I'd like to see what there is left of it.”

Quickening our steps we were soon at the yard. Passing around to the side door, we tried it, finding it unlocked. Mechanically I led the way through the dining-room to the hall, and on to the door of the library, which I threw carelessly open. Then I started back in surprise and alarm, for I was face to face with Captain Coulson.

At first he was as startled as I was, then he recognized me, and, snatching a pistol from his belt, fired. The ball passed uncomfortably near my head, and struck Sam, who was just behind me, in the arm, inflicting, however, the merest scratch. With the only oath on his lips I had ever heard him utter, the old sailor sprang by me, and grappled with the Tory. He had the strength of an infuriated lion, and in his grasp his victim was as helpless as a fawn. In a half minute he had been disarmed, and thrown upon the floor, where Master Green knelt upon him, crying :





Sam had the strength of an infuriated lion, and in his grasp his victim was as a helpless fawn. Page 252.

*A Tory's Revenge*







“I dunno which is best, to choke out yere mis’rable life right here, or to save ye for the gallus.”

“Save him !” I shouted in my excitement, and rushing forward to Sam’s help.

“I reckon that’s best,” he responded. “It’s better to let the authorities kill the cuss than to do it myself. I’ll hold him while ye git a rope.”

I ran out to the kitchen, where I found a clothes-line, with which we speedily bound our prisoner. Then, glancing about us, we saw why the royalist had visited the house and alone.

Above the mantel a huge panel had been removed, disclosing a secret closet of some size. From this two small leather-bound boxes had been taken, and placed upon the table, whose contents the Captain was examining at the moment I intruded upon him. Evidently he had come to secure the valuables, for the caskets contained papers, and bags of money and cases of jewels.

Noticing I had discovered the treasure, he exclaimed sarcastically :

“It’s right there where you can help yourself, and I expect it will be just like you to carry it all off.”

“I am not a thief, if you are a scoundrel,” I replied hotly. “But there is one thing I do in-



tend that you shall do: It is to pay me every shilling you owed my dead father, and my full wages for the time I have been with you."

"And thar's a matter of a few pounds you may as well hand over to me," chimed in Sam.

"I'll tell you what I will do," the Tory exclaimed, after a moment of silence. "Let me go, and I'll give you each a hundred pounds. It is there in the boxes, and you can count it out for yourselves."

"Can't do it, ole man," Master Green returned with a solemn shake of his head. "It won't do to cheat the gallus of ye, nohow. Ye muss swing for it, jess as ye once meant this lad should."

"There is one thing we will do, though," I replied hastily and unthinkingly, "That is, if Sam agrees. Pay us each the full amount that rightfully belongs to us, and you may do what you please with the rest of these valuables."

"What will you do with them, if I don't?" he questioned.

"Turn them over to the Continental authorities, and let them decide what it is best to do with them," I declared.

"I reckon we better do it anyway," put in Sam. "They'll do the right thing by us."

How the controversy would have ended I do



not know, for at that instant there was the sound of feet at the front door, and a voice which I recognized as that of Lieutenant Gay called out :

“Here we are, Captain, all ready for you.”

Instantly Master Green, who had remained beside the Tory, clapped his hand over his mouth, while I tiptoed to the nearest window and peeped out. Lieutenant Gay was alone on the stoop, but there was a squad, numbering at least a dozen men, in the street.

“They’re too many for us, Sam,” I said, going back to my comrade. “We must run for it. Take one of the boxes, and follow me.”

Catching up the nearest casket I closed its lid, and darted into the hall, while Sam followed my example and kept close at my heels. Then up the stairs we went, the Captain meantime crying loudly for help.

We were in Mistress Coulson’s room before the Lieutenant and his men got into the house, for they had to go around to the side door to obtain an entrance, and then not until they had unbound the Tory and heard his story did they realize his captors were still in the house. This gave us time to pass through Jane’s room into the kitchen loft, where my companion asked me in a whisper :



“Ain’t ye gittin’ us into a trap, Ben?”

“No, as you’ll see,” I replied, walking quickly down to the end of the attic, and pressing the movable board with my right hand. It slid back, and the next minute we were in the little stable chamber with our way of exit closed behind us.

“That’s cute now, ain’t it?” Sam remarked, as we sat down upon the bed. “Sure it’s safe to stay here?”

I nodded, adding :

“They’ll probably search the barn after they do the house, but before they come up here we’ll slip back into the attic. We’ll not leave the house until they have departed.”

The sailor quickly comprehended my plan, and we sat there in silence, listening to the tread of our pursuers in the adjoining chambers. They came into the kitchen loft, but discovered nothing to lead them to suspect we were only a foot away. It was soon evident that Captain Coulson was not with this party, for a moment later we heard him calling from below :

It’s no use to look for them up there, Lieutenant Gay. I found the kitchen door open. Doubtless they ran down the back way, and were out of the house before you were in it. We must look for them outside.”



Almost simultaneously the sound of steps leaving the house, and entering the stable was heard, and we fled back into the attic just in time to escape from the men who visited my little chamber. Not sure but there would be a renewed search of the house, we sat there in the loft for a long while, ready to go in either direction which promised us safety. But no one came near us, nor did we, after the first few minutes, hear any steps about the dwelling or the barn. At length I said :

“ We are safe, Sam.”

“ Yes, an’ got the ole man’s boxes,” he added with a chuckle.

“ We’ll fasten them right up here, and turn them over, contents untouched, to the Town Committee,” I remarked.

“ Sartin,” he agreed, helping me to fasten down the clasps.

“ Shall we attempt to get out of town now ? ” I inquired.

“ I like my quarters,” Sam retorted, taking out his pipe and proceeding to fill it. Why not stay here till the redcoats go back to the ships ? ”

There was no reason why we should not do it, as the house certainly seemed to offer us a safe refuge, so I consented. From a window in Mistress Coulson’s room we watched the lifting of the



smoke, the departure of the land force, and the cessation of the bombardment. This was about six o'clock, and Master Green immediately proposed a course which had already occurred to me : It was that we remain where we were all night.

“We’ve got a roof over us, an’ a bed to sleep in, an’ perhaps food. We might look an’ see ; anyway we can git along one night right here.”

I went down to the pantry, where I found milk, eggs, bread, butter, and cold meat, and between us Sam and I got up quite a meal. Soon after dark we went into the stable chamber, where, throwing ourselves down upon the bed with our clothes on, we quickly dropped to sleep.

Nothing disturbed us during the night, and rising early we went out on the street to look about us. We found the redcoats had already departed, carrying with them every vessel the harbor contained which they had not sunk or burned ; while the entire section bounded by Queen, Center, Fore, and King streets, besides many of the outlying districts, was a mass of ruins. Slowly we made our way up Meeting-house Lane, at the head of which I met Colonel Freeman and Enoch, who were walking in from the country, where they had passed the night.

“It’s a sad sight, Ben,” the Colonel remarked.



“Yes, sir,” I answered ; and then asked : “Have you any idea, sir, how many buildings were destroyed ?”

“Enoch and I have been counting up,” he replied, “and we make it not far from four hundred.” \*

“It’s a great loss,” I ventured to say.

“Yes,” he assented ; “not less than sixty thousand pounds, and the greater part of it falls on those who can little afford to lose it. I think at least one hundred and sixty families have lost all they possessed.”

“And Captain Coulson was the instigator of this terrible destruction,” I continued.

“Yes, and he must answer to a just God for it.”

“Why not let him pay a part of the bill,” I suggested.

The Colonel gazed at me steadily for a moment or two, and then he said :

“You have some reason for that remark, Ben. Tell me what you mean ?”

“Come down to Captain Coulson’s place with us, and we’ll tell you,” I responded.

\* The actual number burned was 414—one hundred and thirty-six dwellings, and two hundred and seventy-eight other buildings.—*Editor*.



Five minutes later, the four of us, for Enoch went along too, were seated in the library, where Sam and I produced the leather-bound boxes, and told of our latest adventure.

“The Provincial Congress will settle this matter,” the Colonel announced, “and there is little doubt but that you both will get the amounts due you ;” then we parted, he to make arrangements to go to Watertown, while we went out to Master Milton’s, in Deering, for we had promised the morning before to return there in time for the funeral of Mistress Coulson.

Some months later Sam and I were members of the crew that brought a prize-ship into Boston. Soon after our arrival the Provisional Governor sent for us, and, upon calling at his residence, we were presented with the full amounts which Captain Coulson owed us. The official furthermore told us that the valuables we had taken from the Tory proved to be worth not far from one thousand pounds, all of which, outside of the sum due Sam and myself, had been placed in the hands of the Falmouth Safety Committee to be distributed among those families which could least afford to lose their homes.

“Thus far,” he added, “has the Tory been made to atone for his atrocious revenge. The rest



is in the hands of Him who hath said : ' Vengeance is mine,' where we can safely leave it."

A declaration to which Sam and I were ready to yield a hearty assent.

**THE END.**







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